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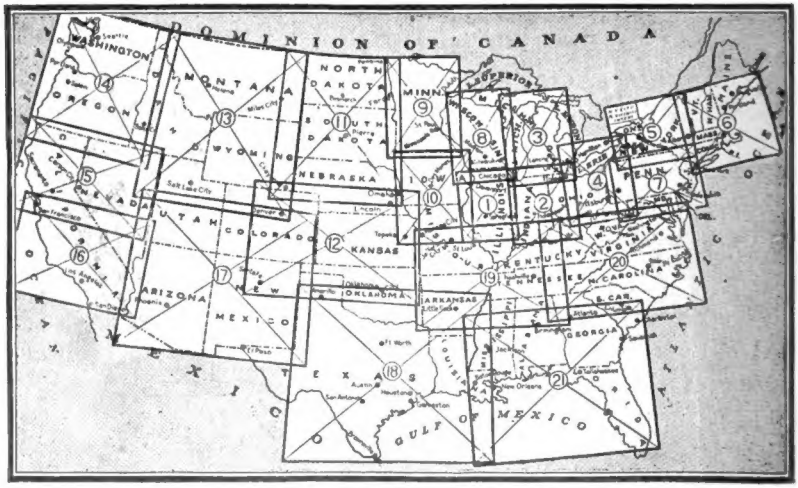

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Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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Adventure

April 20, 1923
Vol. XL No. 2

Sticky Ropes

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE by W. C. Tuttle

Author of "The Ranch of the Tombstones," "Tramps of the Range," etc.

"DUSTY" Corbett licked his dry lips and stared up at a morning sky. Somehow the waking was painful, and realization came slowly. He rolled his head and stared at the fore-feet of a shaggy-legged bronco.

Some straw and a bunch of fox-tail grass seemed to irritate the back of his neck, and he swore wonderingly as he sat up and surveyed his surroundings.

He was, or rather had been, lying in the exact center of a corral, in which were several loose horses. The ground was lumpy and uneven, which accounted partly for the cramp-pains in his neck and shoulders.

On the top pole of the corral sat a long, lanky cowboy, humped like a buzzard, puffing negligently on a very limp cigaret. Dusty surveyed him closely through squinted eyes. Dusty was no beauty; not by any manner of means. His eyes were habitually squinted and set in mats of grin-wrinkles. His nose was deformed from many hard smashes, and, although still in his twenties, he looked to be forty.

After a close scrutiny of the tall cowboy, he spat dryly and scratched his mop of dust-colored hair, which scraggled down over his forehead.

"What in ——'s goin' on?" he asked hoarsely.

"You been drunker'n seven hundred snakes," grunted the tall one seriously.

"Um-m-m!" Dusty licked his lips thirstily. "Weary, that ain't reasonable."

"Weary" Willis rubbed his ear violently, which action dropped his wide sombrero down over his left eye.

"It ain't," agreed Weary. "It ain't noways reasonable f'r a sheriff e-lect to do a thing like that."

Dusty got to his feet and dusted himself with his hat as he walked over to the corral fence, started to climb up beside Weary, but decided that the accomplishment was not worth the effort, and leaned against it instead.

"You're takin' office t'morrow," stated Weary, "and right away yuh gits loaded to the gills and bunks in the corral. My ——, ain'tcha got no pride, Dusty?"

"Yeah," Dusty nodded. "I got pride, Weary. ——, yes, I've got a heap of pride—

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lotsa pride. But what I needed was capacity—not pride!"

"You ain't con-trite, that's a cinch."

"Aw, where'd yuh git that word?" Dusty grew belligerent. "You lay off'n them big words, cowboy. 'F yo're goin' to be my deputy, why in —— do yuh suffer me to lay out here in the open?"

"I ain't no bouncer," said Weary. "Nobody hired me to throw drunks out of the corrals."

"Aw-w-w," protested Dusty, "yuh ain't sore at me, are yuh, Mister Willis? C'm here t' me!"

As he spoke he grasped Weary by both feet and yanked him loose from his perch. The tall cowpuncher hooked his elbows around the top-pole and tried to hang on, but Dusty was not to be denied, and a moment later he was sitting on Weary's chest, and Weary was begging to be released.

"Ain't no corral-bouncer, eh?" jeered Dusty. "Let yore boss lay out in the corral, will yuh? Beg to be excused before I turn yore long nose upside down and let the next rain storm drown yuh."

"Hol' on!" begged Weary. "Leggo m' ribs. Yee-ow-w! Dusty, fer ——'s sake, lemme up! I ain't tol' yuh half the news."

"Go on and tell it," Dusty grinned. "I'm listenin'."

" 'Member leavin' yore paint pony at Smalley's hitchrack last night?"

"Y'betcha. Whatsa joke?"

"He's went," declared Weary seriously.

"Thasso?" Dusty spat reflectively and squinted down at Weary's serious face.

"Who took him?"

Weary rolled his head negatively.

"I dunno. There's a piece of rope hangin' there on the hitch-rack, and it's been smeared——"

Dusty got slowly to his feet and released Weary, who also got up and leaned against the fence. Dusty squinted closely at Weary, as though afraid it was a joke, but Weary was in deadly earnest.

"Sticky-rope, eh?" queried Dusty.

"Smeared with syrup, I reckon," stated Weary softly. "I ain't said nothin' to anybody, Dusty. I knowed you was some'ers around; so I left it t' you."

Dusty rolled a cigaret slowly, shaping it with great care, after which he let the tobacco sift out on the ground and crumpled the paper in his fingers. Weary watched him and marveled at such a show of emotion.

"How much did yuh drink last night?" asked Weary.

Dusty squinted closely at Weary, as if about to tell him that it was none of his business, but the serious expression changed, and he grinned. When Dusty grinned, it was like the sun breaking through the clouds after a week of dreary weather. His face lost its homely contour and became a magnet to children and dogs.

"How many drinks? About six."

"Lost all his education in one night," declared Weary, speaking directly to a fuzzy-looking gray bronco. "Somebody throwed a monkey-wrench into his countin' apparatus."

"Six drinks," declared Dusty emphatically. "S-i-x!"

"Spells, but can't count." Weary shook his head dolefully. " 'Sapphire' Smalley's liquor shore doth do queer things to a cowpuncher."

"Had two drinks with you, t' begin with," declared Dusty, checking them off on his fingers. "Then I had one with Dixie Miller and one with Low-Hat Lawson. Pretty soon I don't take no drinks f'r a long time and then I has one with Smalley, and buys one in return. From that on I kinda loses m' memory, but nobody can tell me that I don't remember when I takes a drink!"

"What was yuh drinkin' out of—a washtub?" Weary seemed very skeptical. "Six drinks don't act thataway. Mebbe yore stummick was empty, Dusty. I've knowed hooch t' act thataway."

"Yeah? Well, now this is a —— of a time to come and expose yore wisdom, Weary. Let's go and take one lingerin' look at that hitch-rack."

They went through the narrow alley between the Eagle River stage office and the livery-stable. About half a block up the street from where they struck the rough sidewalk was the hitch-rack, just beyond the entrance to Sapphire Smalley's saloon.

Several horses were dozing at the long rack, but Dusty's tall, Roman-nosed pinto was not in evidence. The town of Calumet was not a busy place at this time in the morning. In fact, Calumet never did appear to be busy.

Dusty and Weary walked to the hitch-rack and leaned indifferently against the top-rail, while they considered the short piece of rope, which hung across the rack, where Dusty had left Paint.

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It was an inoffensive-looking piece of worn lariat rope, but sticky with a substance resembling syrup. Dusty wrinkled his nose away from the smoke of his cigaret and shoved his thumbs down inside his cartridge belt, while he cogitated deeply.

"Well," he stated finally, "mebbe I talked too —— much last night."

"Prob'ly," agreed Weary dryly. "You mostly allus do. F'r instance?"

Dusty grinned widely and brushed his hand across his lips.

"Declared m' platform, I reckon. Low Hat got to arguin' that Chet Taylor had been a good sheriff, and the bartender said that Chet didn't do nothin' but draw his pay every month. Low Hat said he didn't blame Chet a —— bit f'r not tryin' too hard to nose out the Sticky Ropes, and then I, like a —— fool—" Dusty rubbed the back of his neck and looked soberly down at his toes— "I speaks right out in church, and proclaims that I'm the little hummin'-bird what is ordained t' make this Sticky Rope outfit line up and say their prayers."

"And you only had six drinks?"

Weary glared wickedly at Dusty, who shook his head.

"Up to that time I only had three. Aw, I wasn't drunk, but I must 'a' been exhilarated t' beat ——. Anyway, Paint's gone, and I can sure appreciate the feelin's of anybody what tried t' ride him.

"When I buys that bronc' from Cherokee Jim he's honest about the failin's of the pinto. He says t' me:

"'—— bad hoss! Yo' seeum spots? Devil mark him so he no make mistake an' ride um when hoss die.'

"It took me three weeks and two busted ribs to prove that I could ride him, and now some of them danged thievin', murderin', rope-packin' devils has swiped him."

"Don't holler," begged Weary. "My ——, yuh don't need t' advertise yore ambitions and failin's. Remember that yo're the new sheriff, and a sheriff has got t' be kinda dignified and thoughtful."

"My gosh, I'm thoughtful enough," declared Dusty earnestly. "I sure was plumb attached t' that painted critter and I'm packin' a hunk of lead f'r the jasper that lifted him.

"Took m' saddle, too!" exploded Dusty, after a moment's thought. "My gosh, I never thought about that before! Seventy-dollar hull, fifty feet of danged good lariat and a silver-mounted bridle. Huh! I'm madder than ——, right now!"

Dusty drew his hat down over his eyes and headed for the door of Smalley's saloon, while Weary slouched along behind him, half-hobbling on his run-over heels.

A bad split in the voting strength of the Democratic and Republican parties had been the means of throwing the election to Dusty Corbett, who had been nominated on the Republican ticket, in a county where the Democratic vote was nearly two to one.

Buck Walsh had been beaten by Scott Magruder for the Democratic nomination, but Buck ran Independent and split the vote to such an extent that Dusty won by a big margin. The election of a sheriff in Big Bear County was of more local interest than the election of a President of the United States. It was a he-man's job and gave a certain amount of anxiety to those interested in the activities of their leading peace-officer.

And also there was the Sticky Rope gang to take into consideration. Who they were, no one knew. Their trade-mark was a short section of rope, which had been dipped into syrup and left hanging prominently at the place of their activities.

For over a year they had seen leaving their trade-marks hanging in Big Bear range-land, and their crimes ranged from rustling to murder. Not only was the rope an ear-mark of their depredations, but it also served as a warning to those who became too active in trying to solve the identity of the gang.

In two instances it had caused the recipient to sell out and leave the country. No one seemed immune from them; yet there had been little active work done to apprehend them. It was a case of "suspect thy neighbor and keep still about it."

Dusty and Weary went into Sapphire Smalley's saloon and gambling parlor and leaned on the bar while the bartender tended to their wants. Swampers were busy cleaning out the dirt and débris of the night's activities and the low-ceilinged room resounded hollowly to the clatter of chairs and scraping of table-legs.

Sapphire Smalley, a tall, gaunt man, with a flowing mustache, was slowly checking up the night's receipts at his desk behind the front end of the bar. He was dressed in a soft, white silk shirt, striped trousers and

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patent-leather pumps, and the cerise four-in-hand, which circled his collar, was decorated with a six-carat yellow sapphire. On the third finger of his left hand was another yellow sapphire, which was even larger than the one in his tie, and from each cuff flashed the yellow light from two more large sapphires.

Dusty stood on the bar-rail and considered the profile of Smalley so intently that the gambler turned his head and looked at Dusty.

"Howsa business?" asked Dusty.

Smalley brushed his mustache tenderly and seemed to register that it was none of Dusty's business, but said—

"Oh, all right; why?"

"Figurin' in a loss of one pinto bronc', a perfectly good saddle and a twelve-dollar bit?"

Smalley turned partly around and looked intently at Dusty.

"What do you mean, Corbett?"

"This is what I mean." Dusty leaned closer but did not lower his voice. "My horse was stolen from yo're hitch-rack last night."

Smalley smiled deprecatingly and shook his head.

"I'm not responsible for horses at the rack."

"No," agreed Dusty. "But I'm holdin' yuh responsible, Smalley. Cause why? 'Cause yore bartender handed me a herd of knockout-drops last night; that's why."

Sapphire Smalley's face did not register any emotion whatever, but his eyes expressed unbelief. He looked quizzically at the bartender, who had halted work and was listening closely. Dusty shook his head.

"Not this one, Sapphire. This happens last night."

"But why would he dope you, Corbett?"

"Remains t' be seen, as the undertaker said when the coffin' busted. Anyway, m' pinto is gone."

Dusty did not mention the piece of rope. He did not trust Sapphire Smalley, although he did not feel that Smalley had anything to do with doping him.

"What makes you think you were doped?" queried Smalley.

"I only took six drinks, and I woke up this mornin' in a corral. How long does it take a shot of that kinda stuff t' hit yuh?"

"I don't know what kind of stuff you got," smiled Sapphire. "Maybe you drank six drinks on an empty——"

"Aw-w-w, ——!" exploded Dusty. "Yo're castin' a lot of reflections on m' insides. 'F I thought I didn't have stummick enough t' stand for six drinks, full or empty, I'd have it cut out by a horse doctor and get me a gizzard."

Dusty turned away from the bar and started for the door, but turned and spoke directly to Smalley.

"You better wise-up that night bartender; so he'll have a —— of a good alibi, Smalley."

"You mean Jeff Wharton?" queried one of the swampers, who was trying to sweep up some scattered cards near the doorway.

"Stubby mustache and shy a little finger?" said Dusty.

"Yeah. He left on the stage this mornin', early. Said he was goin' t' Moscow, Idaho."

"Did, eh?" grinned Dusty. "I reckon he had sense enough to come in out of the rain."

He and Weary went outside, where they sat down on the sidewalk and considered the main street of Calumet. About half a block below them, across the street, a wagon had backed up to the front of the sheriff's office and two men were loading in a few pieces of furniture.

"Chet Taylor's movin' out," observed Weary. Taylor was the retiring sheriff.

"S'pose I've got to buy some furniture," observed Dusty dolefully. "I worked like —— to get a chance to spend money for furniture and to dodge bullets and the county pays me a hundred and ten dollars a month. Folks will call me sheriff. Hm-m-m! Sounds good, don't it? Fine—t' everybody but me. Cost me one pinto bronc' and a seventy-five dollar——"

"Aw, don't e-numerate yore loss again," begged Weary. "My gosh, anybody'd think yore outfit was a wonder. That hull wasn't worth no seventy-five dollars, and that pinto wasn't worth six-bits. He'd kill yuh some day."

Dusty nodded seriously and walked back to the rack, where he gingerly picked up the piece of gobby rope and went straight to the open door of the sheriff's office. Weary hobbled along behind him and grinned at Chet Taylor, the portly ex-sheriff, who was perspiring over the removal of a small piece of carpet from the floor.

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Dusty picked up a hammer, which was lying on a desk, and proceeded to nail the section of rope to the outside of the door. Taylor watched him curiously, seriously, when he recognized the symbol. Dusty tossed the hammer back on the desk and contemplated his handiwork.

"What's the idea, Dusty," asked Taylor.

"Advertisin' the fact that I ain't a danged bit afraid of the Sticky Ropes," grunted Dusty. "They're a lot of flat-headed buzzards, thass all, and I'm on their spoor until they high-tails it out of the county."

Taylor turned back to his work and carried the piece of carpet out to his wagon. He had nothing to say regarding the Sticky Ropes. Taylor was a married man and had several children.

DUSTY'S open defiance of the gang was soon known in Calumet and people walked past the office just to get a glimpse of the innocent-looking rope nailed to the door. Weary shook his head sadly and went around with an unlit cigaret hanging to his lip. He was willing to back Dusty in anything, but he did not care to antagonize an invisible foe.

Dusty and Weary had both worked for the Cross-Anchor cattle outfit, owned by Scott Magruder, until Dusty's nomination, which was unsolicited by Dusty. The primaries had been deadlocked over the nomination, and Dusty's name had been suggested. Dusty was known as a fighter, and that is what the office needed. His defeat was a foregone conclusion, until the split came, but Dusty had worked hard.

Scott Magruder, Dusty's former boss, had said many things against Dusty, and even hinted that Dusty knew quite a lot about the Sticky Rope gang, but Dusty did not resort to personalities in his campaign. Perhaps it was because of Stella Magruder, with her big blue eyes and copper-colored hair, who had always snubbed him and made open remarks about his homely face.

Stella was eighteen, slender as a reed and rode like a cowboy. She declared her dislike of Dusty Corbett in no uncertain language, but behind it all was a lack of sincerity. Others believed her, but Dusty only grinned softly, and made faces at her until she laughed. He had not seen her since election and he wondered if his defeat of her father had caused her to really dislike him.

The books of the sheriff's office were a mystery to Dusty and Weary. Neither of them were educated beyond the little "readin', ritin' and 'rithmetic" of the range-land school, and they nodded wisely over papers, and tried to fool themselves and each other into thinking that they knew all about it.

"She's a dead open and shut t' me," declared Dusty that night, as he shoved some papers aside and held his cigaret over the chimney of their lamp to get a light.

Weary nodded enthusiastically and tilted back from the table, just in time to miss being the recipient of a bullet, which hummed through the window, snapped the lamp-chimney from under Dusty's cigaret and splatted into the wall just over Weary's head.

Dusty slapped the guttering lamp aside, and it crashed to the floor, leaving the room in darkness. The crash of the lamp was echoed by two distinct thumps, as Dusty and Weary flopped to the floor.

"Now wouldn't that make yuh sore?" complained Dusty. "Gotta buy another lamp! Dang such a job, anyway!"

"*You* hung that rope on the door." Weary's voice was more than mildly accusing. "You invited 'em t' call yuh, Dusty. Didja ever try havin' a li'l sense?"

"You don't have t' pay for the lamp, do yuh?" demanded Dusty hotly. "Whatcha kickin' about?"

"Well, I danged near got killed, didn't I?"

"Huh!" Dusty's voice was sarcastic and his boot-heels scraped on the floor as he got to his knees.

"Reach me the blanket off the top of the bunk, Weary. We've gotta cover that window."

Dusty got the blanket and edged in close to the window, where he peered out. Moonlight and the yellow lights from the windows flooded the street, but the blocky shadows precluded all chances of seeing who fired the shot.

The report of the gun had caused no one to investigate, as shots in Calumet were frequent. From Sapphire Smalley's came the raucous notes of a three-piece orchestra, while from another direction came the metallic screech of a worn-out phonograph. A bunch of horsemen drifted past and dismounted at the saloon hitch-rack; their voices blending into a meaningless gabble, as they entered the place.

Dusty fastened the heavy blanket o

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the single window and scratched a match. Weary was sitting on the floor, with his head against the leg of a bunk, half-asleep.

Dusty looked at the smashed lamp and procured a candle, which he stuck into the neck of an empty bottle.

"See anybody?" queried Weary, getting slowly to his feet.

"Not a danged soul," Dusty shook his head and produced his cigaret makings. "Them Sticky Ropes has fired their first gun—and—missed! I've got 'em worried, cowboy; I've got 'em worried!"

"And that ain't all," observed Weary slowly as he drew off one of his boots. "You've got me in the same fix, Mr. Corbett."

"Want t' quit?" Dusty squinted closely at Weary, who seemed to be closely inspecting his boot-heel.

"No-o-o," Weary shook his head. "I ain't worth a —— 'less I'm worried, Dusty. Le's hit the hay."

The next morning the rope was gone from the door of the office, and this fact seemed to amuse Dusty greatly.

"I tell yuh I've got 'em goin'," he confided seriously to Weary, who did not seem to share Dusty's enthusiasm. "I'm the li'l whippoorwill that's goin' t' knock hard right between their antlers."

"Yeah," admitted Weary. "I reckon you got 'em scared—almost. You scared 'em so bad that I didn't sleep a wink. Every time I dozed off a li'l I could see that bullet seepin' into the window and chasin' around f'r a chance to bore into m' head. Yuh scared 'em so bad that we've got to stand with our backs against a tree all day and hang a blanket over the winder at night."

"They think we're scared, don't yuh know it?" Dusty grinned, paying no attention to Weary's flow of sarcasm.

"Them jiggers are mind-readers," Weary nodded seriously. " 'F I'd 'a' knowed they was goin' t' act thataway I'd 'a' told you and yore deputy job t' go plumb t' ——; but I'm too scared t' quit now."

Dusty grinned widely and jammed his hat down over one eye, while he did a double-shuffle to relieve his feelings.

"I've sure got a good start, Weary. Got drunk, had m' horse stole and got shot at. 'F that ain't some start at bein' sheriff, what would yuh call it? I'll borrow your rack-o'-bones and go out to the Cross-Anchor and get me a bronc'.

"Mac told me he'd sell me one of them Mission-Cross broncs, dirt cheap, and there's a hammer-headed gray that looks good t' me. I've got a saddle out there, too, if the rats ain't chawed it all up by this time."

"Jack Bonn will likely give yuh a good bronc' and a saddle, 'f yuh ask him," grinned Weary.

"That's one reason I hate t' go out there," replied Dusty. "I sure hate t' have anybody give me a lot o' things thataway, and Jack Bonn'll just about swamp me with presents."

Weary grinned. Jack Bonn was the foreman of the Cross-Anchor outfit and had no use whatever for Dusty and Weary. Bonn was a big, raw-boned, heavy-handed cowman, with no sense of humor. He had been foreman of the Cross-Anchor for almost two years and his work was of the very best, although he was greatly disliked by the wild-riding cowboys of the Big Bear Range.

Bonn rode alone, bunked alone and seemed to hold himself aloof. He was stronger than the average cowboy and was reputed to be fast on the draw, although he had never made a killing in that part of the range. He never drank to excess, but was a fiend for poker or roulette, at which he never seemed to win.

Dusty saddled Weary's horse and swung into the hills. The Cross-Anchor ranch was about ten miles by the road, which wound in and out of the draws and circled the Bald buttes, but a short-cut trail over the buttes lessened the distance by at least five miles. It was a hard climb to the top of the buttes, but from there a horse could almost slide down to the little valley, where the Cross-Anchor ranch-house and outbuildings sprawled among the cottonwoods of Cub Creek.

Autumn had already tinted the foliage with red and gold along the creek, and from high overhead came the soft gabble of a V-shaped flock of brant, winging their way southward. Cattle lazied their way along the bank of the stream. Far beyond, the jagged line of the Little Rockies were almost lost in a blue haze. In another month the scene would change to the desolation of Winter, with its blinding blizzards, bitter cold; when the future of the cattlemen would lie entirely in the hands of Fate.

Dusty rode in through the big gate and dismounted at the ranch-house porch. A collie dog sniffed suspiciously at him for a

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moment and went into ecstasies of joy, barking and dancing like a wild thing.

A small woman, wearing a handkerchief wrapped around her head and carrying a rag rug and a broom, came to the doorway. She squinted at Dusty for a moment and dropped the rug.

"Land sakes, if it ain't Dusty Corbett!" she exclaimed.

"'Lo, Ma!" Dusty grinned. "Howsa family?"

He walked up the steps and shook hands with her. "Ma" Magruder thought a lot of Dusty Corbett.

"Cleanin' house?" Dusty grinned.

"Uh—huh. Gotta be done, Dusty. Mac's sprained his ankle, and we've got comp'ny comin'. Gotta swamp out the old shack."

"Mac sprained his ankle, did he?"

"Yeah. Bronc' fell with him and he tried t' step into the next county, I reckon. It ain't bad, but it makes him cuss all the time. Me 'n' Stell moved him down to the bunk-house, where nobody but Jack Bonn and "Shorty" Miles can hear him take the name of the Lord in vain."

"Say yuh got comp'ny comin', Ma?"

"Uh—huh. Couple of friends of Bonn. Man named Ramsey, and his son. Comin' out here to go huntin'. Bonn's goin' to guide 'em. Say, whatcha mean by stayin' away all this time?"

"Well," grinned Dusty. "I didn't know how yuh felt about the election, and——"

"Sa-a-ay!" Mrs. Magruder shook the broom at Dusty.

"Yuh make me tired—you and Weary. What do yuh think we are? Pers'nally, I'm glad yuh beat Mac. What in thunder does he want of that job? Has t' hire men t' help him run this ranch, and then runs for office. Politics! My gosh, do yuh think I want my husband t' be a target for every pistol-packer in the country?"

"Me and Weary got shot at last night."

"No! Yuh did? Who shot at yuh, Dusty?"

"Through the winder—at night."

"Aw-w-w!" Mrs. Magruder shook her head and squinted narrowly.

"Dusty, ain't there some way to stop things like that? Who are these Sticky Ropes, I wonder? Mac used to say it was a joke, but he's kinda convinced that it's serious."

"Yes'm, I reckon it's serious," grinned Dusty. "Anyway, I'm takin' it serious-like. They stole m' pinto bronc' and saddle yeste'day, and I'm out here t' see 'f I can buy a horse from Mac. He had some o' them Mission-Cross broncs, which he said he'd sell."

"Well, for gosh sakes! Stole the sheriff's horse and took a shot at him. I tell yuh, this old range is gettin' tough, Dusty. I been tellin' Mac that we ought t' sell out and move into town where Stell could get some advantages. First thing I know she'll be marryin' somebody and we won't know but what he belongs to the Sticky Rope gang."

"Who's she goin' t' marry?" asked Dusty blankly.

"Ain't flung her loop yet," grinned Ma Magruder, picking up the rug. "Keep your head up, cowboy. You go down and listen to Mac cussin' the bones in his leg while I shake some alkali out of the rugs."

"Yes'm, Ma, I reckon I will."

Dusty turned and headed for the bunk-house, while Ma Magrudger squinted after him, a smile on her face.

"Don'tcha leave before eatin' time," she called after him. "You don't look like town cookin' was good for yuh."

"I'm sure honin' f'r reg'lar cookin', Ma," he called back, as he shoved open the bunk-house door.

Scott Magruder looked up from his game of solitaire, as Dusty came inside. Magruder was a small man, with a lean face and a whispy-gray mustache, which was invariably chewed even with his lips on one side and hung below his chin on the other. Just now he was unshaven and his thin thatch of gray hair showed the lack of a morning combing.

"Hyah, Scott," greeted Dusty.

"Hyah, Scott," parroted Magruder sarcastically. "Comin' out to gloat over a cripple, are yuh?"

"Nossir." Dusty shook his head seriously. "I'm plumb sorry yuh sprained yore ankle, Scott; I wish it had been yore danged neck. As far as I'm concerned, pers'nally, I don't care a whoop-galoo 'f yuh broke every bone in yore body. That's how much I think of you, yuh old picket-pin.

"Yuh slandered me in the campaign. Yuh—yes, yuh did, Scott. Yuh said a lot of —— nasty things about me. Yuh hinted that I might belong t' the Stic

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Rope outfit. I don't like yuh—nossir. I don't think yo're fit t' go out alone without a keeper. Outside of that, yo're all right."

Scott Magruder squinted closely at Dusty and nodded in agreement.

"I believe yuh, Dusty. You always told the truth, as far as I ever found out, and I betcha you're right in everythin' yuh say. Whatcha reckon I ought to do—shoot m'self in public?"

Dusty's eyes roved around the bunkhouse, as if everything within those four walls were strange and wonderful to behold. His glance came back to Magruder and his face broke into a wide grin, as he held out his hand.

"Hyah, Scott!"

"Well, I'll be doggoned 'f it ain't Dusty Corbett!" exclaimed Magruder, shaking hands violently.

"Long time I no see yuh, Scott."

"Y'betcha it is, Dusty. Whatcha doin' for a livin'?"

"Sheriffin'."

"Thasso? Well, I'm sure glad t' hear it. Set down and rest your hoofs, cowboy. Mighty glad t' see yuh."

And thus amicable relationship was again established. No denials, no arguments. The past had been forgotten and forgiven.

"Sure yuh can have one of them Mission-Cross broncs," said Magruder, after Dusty had told of the loss of the pinto. "Help yourself. Your old saddle's hangin' up in the barn. Whatcha know about them Sticky Ropes?"

"I dunno much, but I'm goin' to, Scott," declared Dusty. "'F I get 'em mad enough at me they'll sure overplay their cards. Who's these folks that are comin' in today?"

"Name's Ramsey. Jack Bonn knowed 'em for a long time, he says. Got a lot of money, I reckon. They wants t' hunt and Jack's goin' t' act as guide for 'em. Some more of them —— tenderfeet, I suppose. Have t' picket 'em out to a guide t' keep 'em from gettin' lost."

"Goin' t' live here at the Cross-Anchor?"

"Uh-huh—kinda. Bonn says he'll hive 'em up at old 'Snag' Shirey's place, when they're huntin', but they'll be here for quite a spell, I reckon."

"Seen old Snag lately, Scott?"

"Couple of weeks ago I seen him and that mongrel hired man of his. Know him, Dusty?"

"Palo Huston?" snorted Dusty. "I betcha I do. Gets on m' nerves. Laughs just like a coyote—kinda lifts his lip, and he ain't got no chin. Him and old Snag are a fine pair of coyotes."

"That's no lie," agreed Magruder. "She's a wonder they ain't killed each other a long time ago."

Came the sounds of some one at the door, and a tall, wry-necked cowboy with deep-set eyes and prominent teeth came inside. He glanced from Magruder to Dusty vacantly.

"Hyah, Shorty," greeted Dusty cordially.

"Well, if it ain't the sheriff!" exclaimed Shorty Miles. "How's you-all, Dusty?"

"I'm-all is all right," grinned Dusty. "How's she comin'?"

"Aw' right, Dusty."

"Dusty wants t' get one of them Mission-Cross animals," explained Magruder. "Got any handy?"

"Yeah," thoughtfully, and then to Dusty: "'Member that gray son-of-a-gun, with a hammer-head? That or'nary lookin' gray, with pure white laigs?"

"'At's the one," grinned Dusty. "Reg'lar he-hoss."

"Yes'm," nodded Shorty. "He shore is. Th'owed Bonn six times, hand-runnin'. He-hoss and he-devil. Kick the sody out of a biscuit and never bust the crust. Man, yo're plumb welcome to him, and a fond farewell to thee."

"How much yuh want for him, Scott?" asked Dusty.

"Not a —— thing. He ain't worth nothin' t' me, and I ain't sellin' somethin' that ain't worth nothin'. Take him free, gratis for nothin'. I'd admire t' see yuh fork him, Dusty. When Bonn couldn't stay——"

"You gets yore wish," nodded Dusty. "I'll switch the saddle off Weary's bronc', and I'll ride that hammer-head t' Calumet, or the Sticky Ropes won't have me for a target again. C'm on, Shorty."

The Mission-Cross gray was a wonderful piece of outlaw horseflesh, and would have delighted the heart of any horseman. Long-coupled, long-legged, lean as a greyhound, with a coat sparkling like the sheen of gray silk, in spite of the fact that it had never felt brush nor comb. The head was long and snake-like, with an almost square muzzle.

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It halted in the middle of the corral and looked with suspicion upon Dusty, who was shaking out the coiled lariat. Twice the tall gray turned completely around, as if trying to make up its mind just what to do, and as it started another turn, the loop snapped forward from Dusty's hand and dropped over the gray's head.

With a squeal of rage the gray flung itself sidewise, rearing and bucking; whirling this way and that, like a gamey fish, trying to shake loose a hook. Dusty tried to follow up the rope, speaking softly to the enraged horse, but the outlaw did not understand kindness, and chased Dusty to the safety of the corral fence.

"I reckon he's gotta be th'owed," said Shorty as he shook out another rope and slid down into the corral. For a moment they had to fight the gray with rope-ends to keep it from running them down, and when it broke to get away, Shorty snagged it's forefeet in a low-flung loop, and the tall gray horse almost turned a somersault.

Came a cloud of dusty and flying gravel, the thud, as the outlaw went flat, and Dusty's voice crowing triumphantly, as he perched on the gray's head.

"C'm on with the saddle, Shorty. This is goin' t' be some ark t' ride, if anybody cares t' know."

"You c'n give long odds on that, cowboy," grunted Shorty, dragging the saddle over to the prostrate horse, which was blowing sand with its nostrils and grunting heavily.

"This bronc' would be worth a fortune t' some rodeo outfit. Goin' to use a bridle, Dusty?"

"Hackamore," declared Dusty. "I aim t' ride his tail and hoofs loose, Shorty."

"'F yuh do," grunted Shorty, tying off the latigo, "Jack Bonn won't sing so danged high about bein' the top rider of Big Bear Range."

Dusty looked up from fashioning the rope hackamore and grinned widely.

"Didn't know that Bonn thought he was."

"Ain't much that Bonn don't credit himself with," stated Shorty. "All set, Dusty?"

"Y'betcha. Lemme do this alone, Shorty."

"Don'tcha want me t' ride yuh out of fences?"

"Naw-w-w. Help Scott to the door; so he won't miss none of it, will yuh?"

Shorty bow-legged his way swiftly out of the corral and around to the bunk-house, where he helped Magruder to a seat in the doorway. A spring-wagon outfit was just turning into the big gate, and Shorty swore softly.

"Stop Dusty, if yuh can," urged Magruder. "He might start somethin' with that half-broke team."

Shorty darted away from the bunk-house door, but he was too late. From the corral came a long-drawn yell—

"Yee-e-e-e-o-o-ow!"

Came the splintering rattle of loose corral poles, the heavy thud of a bucking horse, and around the corner of the long, low barn came Dusty Corbett atop the gray outlaw.

Dusty had swung sidewise in his saddle and had hooked his right spur into the cinch. He was not riding before a rodeo jury now—he was riding to stay in the saddle, and was finding his work cut out for him, at that.

The rope hackamore gave the horse almost complete freedom of head, and the horse was taking advantage of this fact. Straight down past the bunk-house door came the bucker, plunging in a zig-zag line; sun-fishing, worm-fencing, spinning like a top; using every art known to a bucking horse to dislodge its rider.

But Dusty stuck like a burr and fanned the gray's head with his battered sombrero, as they headed for the spring-wagon. Jack Bonn, driving the wagon-team, yelled threateningly at Dusty, while the frightened team cramped the wagon dangerously and fought to break away.

Dusty had no control over his mount. It was like riding a ship in a hurricane, without rudder or sail; and it was no fault of Dusty Corbett that the big gray outlaw crashed into the wagon-team and knocked both horses down, while the gray outlaw, itself, spun like a top and piled up in a heap fifty feet beyond.

In range parlance, Dusty "stepped-off," but his stepping-off was ill timed and he landed, sitting-down in one of Mrs. Magruder's hand-raised rose bushes. From the doorway of the bunk-house came the voice of Scott Magruder:

"Ma-a-a-a! Dusty's settin' on Clementine!"

The big gray got to its feet, with the hackmore tangled in its front feet, and fell

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heavily again. Dusty limped swiftly back and sat down on its head, while Shorty and Jack Bonn fought to untangle the wagon-team.

Jack Bonn was mad and did not try to conceal the fact as he unfastened harness and helped the team to back to an upright position. Stella and the two men did not get off the seats until the horses were both calmed down.

Dusty grinned at Stella and studied the two men with her. One of them was a large man, smooth-shaved, but the light color of his upper lip proclaimed that he had but recently shaved off a mustache. His small gray eyes were shaded with heavy eyebrows, and a cigar was clamped tightly between his thick lips.

The other was a hard-faced, cynical-looking young man of about twenty-five years of age, slightly over-dressed and with no doubt about his own importance.

"Kinda had a jubilee, didn't we, Stell?" queried Dusty, from his seat on the gray outlaw's head.

Before Stella had a chance to reply, Jack Bonn turned from his team and walked toward Dusty, muttering to himself.

"You danged fool!" gritted Bonn viciously. "Whatcha tryin' to do around here?"

"Same t' you," replied Dusty calmly. "You busted up m' ride. I had this gray poundin' his own hoofs off, and you had t' come along and spoil the fun."

"Yeah!" spat Bonn. "What in —— right have you got to be ridin' that gray bronc'?"

Dusty got to his feet slowly and stepped aside to let the gray get up. As it floundered to its feet Shorty Miles caught the hackamore rope.

Dusty walked straight to Bonn, who watched him narrowly. Bonn was bigger than Dusty, but Bonn was very mad. Dusty grinned at him.

"'F yuh want an answer to yore last question," said Dusty slowly, "I can say that it ain't none of yore —— business."

Dusty made a motion to retreat, as he finished, but when Bonn sprang forward, lashing out with one hand, Dusty dove forward and threw his whole weight against Bonn's shins, throwing him forward on his face.

Like a flash Dusty bounced to his feet, dove into the sprawling Bonn and pinned his face into the dirt, while he snapped Bonn's gun from its holster and flipped it aside.

Like an angry bull, Bonn surged to his feet, trying to shake Dusty loose, but Dusty's arm was locked under Bonn's chin and his two spurs were locked into Bonn's knees. Bonn cursed chokingly as he staggered about, and finally threw himself backward to shake the smaller man loose.

As they went down backward, Dusty flung himself sidewise and Bonn landed flat on his back alone. The jar of the fall dazed Bonn and he lay flat on his back and stared foolishly up at the faces about him.

At this point the cynical-looking young man decided to take matters into his own hands. He stepped in front of Dusty and attempted to shove him back. Came the dull *chuck* of a blow and the cynical young man capsized into Bonn, sitting down almost exactly upon the upturned face of Jack Bonn, who swore in a muffled voice and squirmed loose.

"Anybody else?" queried Dusty, looking around at Shorty and the other stranger, whose face was as hard as granite as he looked down at his son, who was gazing blankly into space and slowly working his jaw. Into the crowd came Scott Magruder, hopping on one leg. He braced himself against Shorty and squinted at the two men on the ground. Then he looked at Dusty.

"Too —— bad it happened, Dusty. You shore was goin' to ride that gray to a fare-thee-well."

Bonn got slowly to his feet and felt of his empty holster. The cynical young man followed suit, but he seemed very weary and indifferent to everything. The big man spoke directly to Bonn—

"Suppose we let things rest as they are for the present and go into the house."

Bonn nodded in agreement and led the two men into the ranch-house, without introducing them to Mrs. Magruder, who was on the steps. Stella watched them go inside and looked at Dusty, who was staring down at the ground, where some envelops, a pencil or two, a note-book and cigaret papers had fallen during the mix-up.

"Well," said Shorty softly, "them two strangers got out-wested, that's a cinch, and yuh shore combed Mister Bonn and the handsome offspring good and plenty. Dusty, you got one gosh-awful punch."

"Uh-nn-n-n-n!" exclaimed Magruder.

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"That there young Ramsey looked like he kinda went to seed for a minute. Bonn is goin' to love yuh, cowboy. He ain't never done much except talk about his ability, but I'm bettin' he ain't goin' to scalp-dance this victory."

Dusty grinned and looked at Stella.

"Yuh ain't sore at me, are yuh, Stell?" he asked.

"No-o-o, but it is going to make things embarrassing all the way around. Stranger comes to visit you, and gets knocked down on the door-step."

"My gosh, that's right," dolefully. "I'm plumb ashamed of m'self, Stell. Still—I dunno."

"Bonn never introduced 'em to Ma," stated Shorty.

"Bonn didn't even know his own name," grinned Magruder. "Yuh got to excuse him f'r not doin' the right thing."

Dusty grinned and shifted his feet as he examined his right hand, which was swelling slightly from its contact with young Ramsey's jaw.

"Yuh lost some things out of yore pocket," reminded Shorty, pointing at the litter in the dust.

Dusty picked up the articles and shoved them into his pocket.

"Bonn knew you were here," volunteered Stella. "We met Weary in Calumet. You know that homely cowpuncher who works for Snag Shirey, at the Box S?"

"Palo Huston?" queried Dusty.

"Yes. He ran into us on the street and talked with Bonn and the Ramseys for a few minutes, while I went into the store. Weary came along as I came out, and he told us that you were out here. I wouldn't trust that Huston very far. Looks like he wasn't quite all there."

"Did Weary tell yuh about us gettin' shot at?" grinned Dusty.

"No. Who shot at you, Dusty?"

"Sticky Ropes."

Dusty hitched up his belt and told the main incidents of his first day in office, while he manufactured a cigaret.

"I betcha them Sticky Ropes are just one man," said Shorty wisely. "Some cowpuncher's been eatin' loco-weed."

Scott Magruder shook his head.

"No, I don't think so, Shorty. Somebody shot down twenty head of Dick Shearer's cows and left the sticky rope for a marker. I don't know what Dick knew about them, but I do know that somebody killed him in the door of his little line camp on Fisher creek, and left another rope.

"A week after that a rope was left hangin' to the door of Clyde Smith's ranch-house, and inside of a week Clyde sold out and went into Idaho. Since then several outfits have lost cows. The Bar-O-Bar has lost at least a hundred head and have found markers hanging to fence-posts and line-camp doors. Now, nobody can tell me that it is the work of one loco cowboy."

Dusty shook his head.

"I reckon yo're right, Scott. This country needs cleanin' out. Mebbe they'll get me, 'cause when a feller is talkin' he never knows whether or not he's talkin' to one of them sons-of-guns; but I'm speakin' right up and open, when I say that I'm gunnin' f'r Sticky Ropes."

Scott nodded gravely, as Dusty stepped over and took the rope from Shorty. The gray outlaw merely backed away from Dusty, but the fight seemed to have been all taken out of it. Perhaps it was still dazed from the impact with the wagon-team, but at any rate it was a much subdued horse.

"You ain't goin' to ride him, are yuh?" queried Shorty.

"Y'betcha," nodded Dusty, "I came to get a horse, and I sure got one."

Dusty led the gray down to the corral, where he put a lead-rope on Weary's horse. Shorty helped Scott back to the bunk-house, and Stella followed Dusty to the corral.

"Don't you think Mr. Ramsey is handsome?" queried Stella seriously.

Dusty turned his head and looked at her, as he grunted something unintelligible and turned back to knotting his rope.

"He has lots of money, too," volunteered Stella.

"Thasso?"

Dusty was having trouble with the knot.

"Jack Bonn told me that the Ramsey family were very rich. The young man's name is Oscar."

Dusty turned and squinted at Stella.

"Thasso? He tell yuh it was?"

"Yes."

"Uh-huh," thoughtfully, "he would, I reckon."

"Said that he wanted to ride horseback with me."

Dusty jerked hard on the rope and

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Weary's horse reared from the unexpected violence.

"They are going to stay here with us for several weeks," continued Stella maliciously. "Oscar said he loved dancing and asked if we had dances in Calumet. I'll bet he can dance; he's so light on his feet."

"Yeah!" snapped Dusty. "I notice he has trouble keepin' 'em on the ground. You tell yore ma that I won't be able to stay f'r dinner, will yuh?"

"Why, certainly," replied Stella indifferently and hurried toward the house with her head in the air. Dusty gazed dolefully after her and shook his head.

"—— the luck! I s'pose I said the wrong thing, as usual. Never have no sense, noway," and then to the gray outlaw—

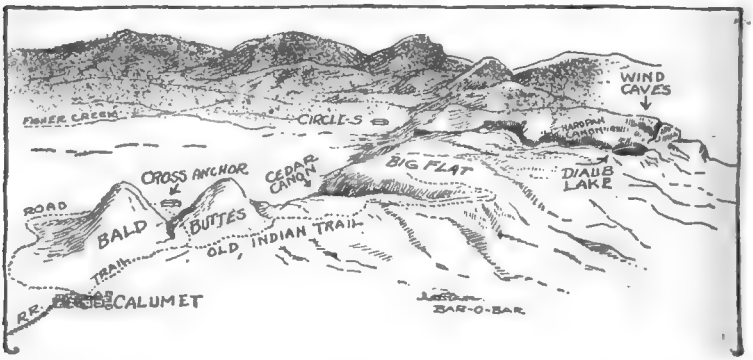
"Go ahead and buck and be —— to yuh!"

He swung into the saddle and set himself for a wild ride, but the tall gray turned like a gentle horse and went around the corner of the barn, past the doorway of the bunk-house and out toward the gate, with Weary's horse following behind.

"I hope to die!" exclaimed Shorty Miles from the bunk-house doorway, and Scott Magruder echoed his words. Straight toward the bald buttes went the two horses and rider, while Stella Magruder stood on the porch and grinned delightedly. She had managed to jar Dusty out of his usual good-humor, and was delighted.

Dusty was very despondent as he rode into the Bald Butte trail which led sharply up the right-hand slope of the tallest butte. Dusty knew that his fight with Bonn and the young Ramsey would make things embarrassing for the Magruder family, and he also felt that he had hurt Stella's feelings.

The gray outlaw squirmed under the touch of the lead-rope, and Dusty was a bit



dubious over what might happen on the narrow trail. If the outlaw started bucking up there, it might mean that the whole outfit would go to the bottom of the cañon.

"Mebbe-so, I better herd yuh," observed Dusty aloud to Weary's horse. He urged the gray to the upper side of the trail and shoved Weary's horse ahead of him, after taking off the lead-rope.

Higher and higher they climbed, until they reached the fairly level trail, which wound around the butte and sloped off into the breaks south and east of Calumet. The upper part of the buttes were broken cliffs, without a sign of vegetation, but the bottom of the cañon was heavily brushed with jack-pine and grease-wood.

Suddenly Weary's horse flung itself sidewise, pawed wildly at the upper side of the trail and went over backwards; while from beyond them, somewhere in that jumble of broken rocks came the keen snap of a rifle.

The sudden whirling of the horse, the shot and the subsequent falling off the trail frightened the gray outlaw badly, and Dusty was almost unseated at its first plunge. But instead of bucking, the outlaw drove ahead with the speed of a quarter-horse; going straight toward the spot whence had come the bullet.

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It was useless for Dusty to try and control the gray with the hackamore; so he drew his gun, swung low along the gray's shoulder and prayed that the bush-whacker might not be a wing-shot with a rifle.

Straight into the jumble of tall rocks raced the gray, running like a gray ghost, its unshod hoofs making little sound in the dusty trail; while Dusty's eyes flashed here and there, swiftly, as he tensed his gun for the first shot.

Suddenly he caught a flash of colored cloth in the rocks below the trail. It was only a flash, but he fired quickly before the gray swept on into another pass between the out-croppings. A bullet zipped past his head and ricocheted off the rocks beyond him.

The gray snorted and increased its pace a trifle. The trail dipped downward slightly now and Dusty's left stirrup scraped the bank, as the gray swept around the crooked trail.

Dusty holstered his gun and sat upright in the saddle now. He had no further fear from the man with the rifle now; he only feared for what this crazy gray might do on the downward trail.

"Boy, boy!" he gritted into the wind, "'F yuh ever hit bottom alive and well, I've sure got a runnin' horse that'll throw gravel into the face of anythin' on four feet."

But the gray horse was no fool, and the rockier trail was beginning to hammer its bare feet badly. Slower and slower became the mad gallop, and the last fifty feet of the steep trail was made in a slow, jerky gallop, and they swept out into the gentle slope of the sage-brush hills.

Dusty drew up gently on the hackamore and the gray slowed down to a walk. Dust still floated upward in a filmy veil from far back along the trail, but Dusty was unable to see back to the rocky breaks where the ambush had been laid.

Dusty knew that Weary's horse was dead. Even if the bullet had only crippled it the long fall into the cañon would have killed it.

"Gray horse," said Dusty aloud, "yuh sure done the best thing. 'F we'd 'a' tried t' go back he'd 'a' got us sure. I betcha he only seen one horse from where he was at. We was close together and coming in a dead-straight line to him. Hm-m-m!"

Dusty began wondering who had tried to kill him. He felt that it must be one of the Sticky Ropes—some one who knew that he had been at the Cross-Anchor and that he would come back over the Bald Butte trail.

It was an unpleasant sensation to know that he might be shot at from ambush at any time. He grinned, but with little mirth, and peered back over his shoulder, as he urged the gray into an easy gallop.

"I reckon I bought into somethin', when I got m'self elected sheriff," he mused aloud. "I had a idea that the Sticky Ropes would get too danged anxious and show their hand, but it kinda looks like I was goin' t' need as many lives as a cat t' test out that theory. Anyway," he grinned widely and looked down at the bobbing head of the gray outlaw, "I've got a humdinger of a bronc' under me and I've still got m' health and girlish laughter. I hate t' do it, but I reckon I've got t' be careful —kinda."

Dusty rode into Calumet and went to the office, where Weary was sitting half-asleep, with his feet on the desk. In a few words, Dusty explained about the killing of the horse, and Weary exploded with indignation.

"Hundred dollars, that horse was worth —easy! I tell yuh, that was the best horse in Big Bear country."

"Don't yell," advised Dusty. "You never sung no praises over that bronc' when it was alive. Yuh won him in a pitch game, didn't yuh? Yes, yuh did. Anyway, he wasn't worth more than a dollar and six-bits, but he sure saved me a lot of misery. Do yuh know if Palo Huston is still in town?"

"Naw, he left two hours ago."

"You seen him pull out?"

"Y'betcha. He drifted just a li'l after Bonn drove away with a wagonful of folks for the Cross-Anchor. Say, do yuh think he bushwhacked yuh, Dusty?"

"I dunno."

Dusty hook his head.

"I got a glimpse of somebody in the rocks and I sure whanged loose at 'em, but I was goin' like a bat out of —— and never had much time. Anyway, whoever it was, they spinned another bullet after me."

Weary smoked thoughtfully for a while.

"Jack Bonn asked where you were, and I told him yuh had gone to the Cross-Anchor. Lemme see——"

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Weary rubbed his chin.

"No, Palo wasn't there when I told Bonn. Stella comes out of the store 'bout that time, and then Palo drifts up t' us.

"I've gotta set on my gun-hand when he's around; so I pulled out and left 'em talkin'. Stella went back to the store, if I 'member right. Them strangers was talkin' to Palo about the game country back of the Box S. 'Pears that they're out here to hunt.

"I was in Sapphire's place for a while, and when I comes out I seen Bonn drivin' out of town, and Palo was over to the hitch-rack cinchin' up his saddle. He pulled out right away, but I didn't pay no tention which way he went."

"Notice 'f he had a rifle?"

Weary shook his head.

"Nope. Him and old Snag mostly always do pack rifles, though."

"Might 'a' been him," mused Dusty, "but I won't never know 'f it was. I comes almighty close t' selectin' m' harp, I'm tellin' yuh!"

Dusty reached into his pocket for cigaret papers and drew out the handful of stuff which he had picked up at the scene of the battle at the Cross-Anchor. Among the stuff was a small, red note-book, with a dog-eared cover. It showed much wear and was discolored from weather.

Dusty thumbed the covers.

"That never fell out of my pockets," he declared. "I betcha I was so flustrated that I thought it belonged t' me. Hm-m-m!"

He opened the note-book at random and studied it through half-closed eyes. He slowly turned the pages, which were bent and mutilated at the edges, while he frowned deeply.

"What is it, Dusty?" Weary noticed Dusty's interest and grew curious.

"I don't *sabe* it," grunted Dusty. "Feller who wrote it used a pencil and it ain't all readable. Listen t' this and see if it means anythin'. Here's the word, 'Feeders,' and after it is a dash, and the word, 'sheep.' Then it says, 'Feed poor' and after that, 'Dangerous to continue now.'

"The next line says, 'Stock in good shape,' and after that it says, 'Time ripe to buy.'

"This next line is kinda blurred, but it says, 'No stock available,' and under that it says— "Dusty squinted closely— " 'To be used, if there is any concerted movement among cattlemen."

"What does she mean?" queried Weary.

"Danged 'f I know. Looks like one of them code things that yuh use in telegraphin', when yuh don't want nobody t' know what yuh mean."

"Who owned it, Dusty?"

Dusty shook his head and told Weary of his fight with Jack Bonn and the younger Ramsey. Weary gasped with delight and forgot all about the note-book in his joy over Dusty's description of Bonn's downfall.

"And yuh popped Mister Smart Feller right on the chin, eh? Man, I hail yuh with delight! And Jack Bonn throwed himself! Mamma mine, them thoughts are as tinklin' cymbals to m' ears, I tell yuh. Dusty Corbett, may shadders never cross yore path! Whoo-o-o-ee-e-e!"

"And one of them lost this here note-book," stated Dusty, tapping the book on the edge of the table.

Weary took the book and looked it over.

"The —— thing's as old as the hills, Dusty. Mebbe that was a code book that Robinson Crusoe used on Friday."

"Prob'ly," grinned Dusty replacing the note-book in his pocket and getting to his feet. "I've gotta put up m' horse. Got the best darned bronc' that ever rattled a hock, Weary. Fastest thing yuh ever seen and——"

"Since my horse is dead," interrupted Weary. "That horse-killin' sure allowed a lot of crow-baits t' claim certain honors. Didja ever see my bronc' run?"

"Never did," declared Dusty.

"I'm glad of that," grinned Weary. "It sure gives me a fine chance t' lie and nobody can disprove it. Oncet upon a time I ran into a bunch of antelope——"

But Dusty grabbed his hat and made a hurried exit, while Weary grinned widely and manufactured another smoke.

Dusty stabled his horse and studied the note-book again. He could not make out the reasons for such a code, and he did not know which one of the men had lost it. On the inside of the back cover was a stationer's mark, which showed that the book had been purchased from a book store in Searchlight, Wyoming.

Dusty wandered down to the little telegraph office and leaned idly on the little counter, watching the operator refilling some battery jars. The man was undersized, unshaven and had gimlet-like eyes.

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He glanced at Dusty, who grinned and said—

"Pardner, I'm the sheriff of this county and I'm kinda startin' t' ask a question."

The man replaced the full jar into a cupboard-like contrivance and wiped his hands on a piece of waste. He came over to Dusty and nodded for him to continue.

"Know Jack Bonn?" asked Dusty.

The man took this under advisement, but finally shook his head.

"Not that I know of?"

"How long yuh been here?"

"About a year and a half."

"Uh-huh," grunted Dusty. "Yuh don't send a lot of messages, do yuh?"

"Not so many. Why?"

"I was just thinkin' you'd remember this feller, 'f he sent many, thasall."

The operator nodded and spat dryly. He was not much given to conversation.

Dusty reached for a telegraph blank and wrote out the following message:

SHERIFF'S OFFICE
SEARCHLIGHT WYOMING
WANT INFORMATION REGARDING JACK BONN WHO USED TO LIVE NEAR YOUR TOWN WIRE COLLECT
(SIGNED) CORBETT SHERIFF

The operator counted the words, accepted payment and shoved the telegram over on his desk. Dusty grinned and leaned across the counter and tapped the operator on the arm.

"Send it right away, will yuh, pardner?"

"Certainly; in a few minutes."

The operator turned back to his battery-cabinet, but Dusty was not to be denied.

"I want t' hear it rattle," insisted Dusty. "Go ahead, will yuh, please?"

The man appeared peeved for a moment, but then grinned.

"How could you tell whether I sent your message or not?"

"Pardner—" Dusty leaned far across the table and shifted his belt as he leaned—"Pardner, you send that wire right now, and I'll make you a little bet that I'll call yuh almighty quick, if yuh make one mistake."

The operator studied Dusty's serious face for a moment, turned and sat down at his desk. His hand trembled slightly, as he opened his key. Once he turned his head slightly and caught a reflection of Dusty's face in the office mirror, as he ticked out the message. Dusty was watching him closely and moving his lips slightly.

As the operator closed his key, Dusty turned and walked out of the door. On the outside he leaned against the building and grinned widely. He hadn't the slightest idea of what the operator had sent, but he was very sure that the operator had not made any mistakes.

Dusty did not know whether Jack Bonn had ever lived in Searchlight, but he was taking a chance. He had no reason for distrusting the telegraph operator, except that Dusty was beginning to distrust everybody. After two attempts on his life he was beginning to look seriously upon his position.

IT WAS about noon the next day, when Jack Bonn, Stella and the two Ramseys rode into Calumet. Bonn was leading a pack-horse, and on this pack-horse was roped the body of a man.

Weary was standing in the doorway of the office and saw the cavalcade ride up to the front of the Calumet general store. He called to Dusty, who was studying how to make out an arrest warrant.

"Somebody has been got," stated Weary ungrammatically, pointing toward the store. "Jack Bonn is bringin' in somebody."

Dusty scowled and followed Weary up to the store. Several men had gathered around, questioning, wondering, when Dusty came up and looked at the dead man.

It was Palo Huston. Dusty did not say anything, but waited for Bonn to speak. Stella dismounted and went into the store, and Dusty's eyes followed her.

"He's been shot," stated Bonn indifferently. "We were coming over the Bald Butte trail and found him up near the highest point. He was pretty bad, y'understand, and we was goin' to take him back to the Cross Anchor.

"I got him into my saddle and we started back, but this danged bronc' started buckin' on that high trail. Yuh know how dangerous that trail is; so I seen there wasn't no chance to stop him from buckin', and got off real fast.

"I figured that the bronc' was goin' off the trail, but he pitched Palo off and whirled up the hill, where we caught him. Palo went plumb to the bottom, and was as dead as a door-knob when we got to him; so we brought him to town."

"Who do yuh reckon killed him—shot him?" asked one of the bystanders.

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"Remains to be seen," stated Bonn, looking knowingly at Dusty, who had said nothing.

Dusty realized that it had been Palo who tried to kill him on the Bald Butte trail, and that he, Dusty, had shot better than he knew. But he was not going to admit that he had planted the bullet in Palo Huston. He also realized that every one at the Cross-Anchor knew that he had been over the Bald Butte trail the afternoon before.

"What do yuh think of it?" asked Bonn.

"Me?" Dusty looked up and grinned at Bonn. "I think yuh was careless, Bonn. That wasn't no way to treat a wounded man, if yuh asks me."

"Aw, ——!" snorted Bonn. "My part of it was an accident."

"Yeah? Well, mebbe the shootin' was an accident, too. Did yuh ever think of that?"

"Mebbe," sarcastically, "somebody was shootin' at a coyote and hit Palo."

"Chances are they was," nodded Dusty, and turned to Weary. "Will you take the body down to Doc Bevin, Weary. He'll want to look it over."

Weary took the lead rope and started down the street, followed by several interested spectators, whose morbid curiosity was not satisfied. Bonn and the Ramseys dismounted and went into the store. Young Ramsey did not even look at Dusty, who leaned against a porch-post and seemed deep in thought.

Stella came out of the store in a few minutes and started past Dusty, but he stepped in front of her. She looked at him coldly, indifferently, but he made up a face at her and she was forced to smile.

"Stell, what do yuh know about this Palo Huston deal?"

"Didn't Bonn tell you all about it, Mr. Corbett?"

"He did, Miss Magruder," said Dusty seriously, "but I want to know a few things. Honest t' ——, Stell', I want to find out a few things. Was Palo Huston hurt bad when yuh found him?"

"Yes, he was unconscious."

"Uh-huh. And then what?"

"He talked like a crazy man. I wanted to bring him to a doctor, but Bonn insisted on taking him to the ranch. I didn't hear all that Palo Huston was saying, but he kept raving about sticky ropes."

"Thasso?" Dusty grew interested. "Sticky Ropes, eh? And Jack Bonn's horse bucked real hard, eh?"

"I don't know," admitted Stella. "I was at the rear end of the bunch, and you know how narrow the trail is? I heard Bonn yell and I saw him jump off on the upper side. There was sort of a mix-up and I heard one of the Ramseys yell something about Bonn being lucky. I got off my horse and climbed around there. Palo Huston had fallen off the horse and was way down in a thicket at the bottom of the cañon. It took us an hour to get the body back to the trail."

"I'm sure much obliged to yuh, Stell," said Dusty.

"You are very welcome, Mr. Corbett." Stella walked past him and down the street. Dusty looked after her and grinned widely.

"Oh, Stell!" he called.

She stopped and turned.

"Thank yuh for tellin' yore Maw that I wouldn't stay for supper yesterday."

Without a word Stella turned and went down the street. She wanted to get mad at Dusty Corbett, but it seemed almost impossible. Bonn and the two Ramseys came out of the store and started across toward Smalley's saloon, but Bonn noticed Dusty and came slowly back to him.

"Corbett, I didn't want to say much before the crowd, but down where we found Palo Huston we also found that Circle J bronc' that belonged to Weary Willis. It had been shot through the head. Hadn't been dead more than a day or so, 'cause the coyotes hadn't got it yet."

"What do yuh think?" queried Dusty seriously.

Bonn looked closely at Dusty, as he said—

"You rode that bronc' to the Cross-Anchor yesterday."

"Uh-huh. And then what?"

Bonn's eyebrows went up a trifle and he turned on his heel, as he said—

"Well, it's none of my business."

"No," shot back Dusty coldly. "I don't think it is!"

Dusty walked down to the doctor's office. He was in a quandary just how to explain the killing of Palo Huston. He had shot at a flash of colored cloth, while riding at break-neck speed, and it was hard to believe that he had hit his target.

And Stella had said that Palo had raved about the Sticky Ropes. Was Palo one of them, or did he know that one of them had shot him? Weary met Dusty at the door of the doctor's office.

"Bullet through his shoulder, broken neck

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and a busted skull," enumerated Weary.

"Well, I reckon that's plumb sufficient," observed Dusty, and went on into the room where Doctor Bevin was showing some of the bystanders the bullet hole. The doctor looked up and nodded at Dusty.

"Would the bullet have killed him, Doc?" asked Dusty.

"Not necessarily, Corbett—not with medical assistance. The bullet was through the left shoulder, high above the heart, and was not necessarily fatal."

"Been shot quite a while?"

"That's difficult to say. Possibly was shot yesterday. He had lost considerable blood. Still, I feel that I could have saved him."

"Then yuh think that the fall killed him, Doc?"

"Without a doubt."

"Hold an inquest?"

"Yes, I suppose we'll have to. Won't do any good, but the law requires it, Corbett. I dug out the bullet."

The doctor turned and picked up a bullet, which he handed to Dusty.

"Perhaps you had better keep that as evidence."

Dusty studied the bullet closely, nodded and put it in his pocket.

"You better tell Bonn and the rest of his party to be at the inquest tomorrow afternoon, Corbett," stated the doctor, and Dusty nodded slowly as he turned and went out of the door. Weary fell into step with him and they went to the office.

"Well," said Weary as they sat down inside the office, "you shot pretty danged straight, Dusty. That son-of-a-gooster won't bother anybody again."

Dusty took the bullet from his pocket and rolled it across the desk to Weary, who picked it up and looked closely at it.

"Well, say, this is a .38!" grunted Weary. "You don't shoot .38's in your .45, do yuh, Dusty?"

Dusty shook his head.

"Can't be did, Weary. Just when I was congratulatin' m'self on good shootin', somebody steps in and ruins m' good opinion."

"Who shoots a .38?" asked Weary.

"Prob'ly a dozen men around here. It's easier to ask who shoots a .45, or a .44. 'Pears that the .38 is a popular caliber in this range; which makes it danged hard to tell who fired that shot."

"Too danged bad that Palo never lived to talk," observed Weary.

Dusty got to his feet and walked to the door, where he leaned against the wall and cogitated deeply. In front of the store, Bonn was packing the horse. Stella was already mounted and talking to the younger Ramsey, while the elder Ramsey watched Bonn.

Dusty surged away from the door and walked up to them. Bonn looked up from his packing and scowled at Dusty.

"Inquest t'morrow afternoon," stated Dusty, "and all of you folks will have to be here."

"——!" swore Bonn under his breath. "We're leavin' early in the mornin' for the hills."

"I reckon you'll have to put it off, Bonn."

Bonn yanked a rope tight and tied it off.

"You reckon so, do yuh?" savagely. "Suppose we don't?"

"Then I'll have t' come after yuh," said Dusty softly. "Suit yoreself, Bonn."

"Blamed nuisance," said young Ramsey. "Too bad we found the body."

"Yeah, it is," said Dusty. "Too danged bad."

Bonn finished his work and swung on to his horse, leading the way out of town. Stella looked closely at Dusty, turned her horse and rode away beside young Ramsey, engaging him in animated conversation. But Dusty only grinned. For some reason he felt very well satisfied with himself.

He walked down to the telegraph office and leaned in across the counter. The operator was reading a paper-backed novel but looked up and smiled as he reached over on his desk and picked up a telegram, which he handed to Dusty.

"Just came a few minutes ago," he stated.

Dusty glanced at it and nodded his thanks, as he started away, but turned.

"What's the charges on this, pardner?"

The operator hesitated for a second.

"It was paid at Searchlight."

Dusty went outside and looked at the telegram again. It read:

SHERIFF CORBETT CALUMET MONT
JACK BONN WELL KNOWN HERE AND GOOD REPUTATION WORKED IN CATTLE HERE SEVERAL YEARS WELL LIKED BY EVERY ONE AND CONSIDERED GOOD CATTLE MAN.
(SIGNED) WILSON SHERIFF

Dusty scratched his head thoughtfully,

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folded up the telegram and put it in his pocket.

"Well liked by everybody, eh?" he grunted. "Good reputation. My ——, what kind of a town is that Searchlight? I'll betcha this here Wilson kissed Jack Bonn good-by when he left. Hm-m-m!"

Dusty shook his head and started back toward the office. He hadn't the slightest idea what he was going to do; where to begin. It looked like a blank wall.

The range country was well represented at the inquest the next day. Jack Bonn testified to practically the same story as he told the day before. The two Ramseys corroborated Bonn's testimony, while Stella Magruder's story was the same, except that it lacked details.

Dusty watched Bonn closely during the testimony. He knew that Bonn was going to remind the jury that Dusty Corbett had been the last man over the Bald Butte trail, and that Weary Willis' horse was at the bottom of Bald Butte cañon; so Dusty took the stand, following Stella, and told of what had occurred on the trail.

"I just shot at a flash of color," stated Dusty. "I wasn't sure it was a man, 'cause I was travelin' fast."

"Why should Palo Huston try to kill you?" questioned Dr. Bevin.

"I dunno." Dusty shook his head. "Unless Palo was one of the Sticky-Rope gang. Yuh see, I've declared open season on them, and mebbe they realize that I mean business."

"Hm-m-m!" Dr. Bevin seemed to have difficulty clearing his throat.

"Have you—er—any evidence that would—uh—connect Palo Huston with the so-called Sticky Rope gang?"

Dusty shook his head and looked at Stella.

"Miss Magruder, would yuh mind tellin' us what Palo Huston said when yuh found him?"

"Not at all, Mr. Corbett," she replied seriously, which drew a grin from the audience.

"He was plumb out of his head," remarked Bonn.

"Is yore name Miss Magruder?" queried Dusty, and Bonn flushed hotly.

"I did not hear all that he said," stated Stella, "but I did hear him say, 'Git even with Sticky Ropes.' "

"And what else did he say?" asked Dusty.

Stella thought for a moment and shook her head.

"He was just mumbling a lot of foolish words, and all at once, while Jack Bonn and Mr. Ramsey were helping him on the horse, he bleated like a sheep."

The audience laughed.

"In just what way, Miss Magruder?" queried the doctor.

"Baa-a-a-a," bleated Stella, and every one, except Dusty, laughed.

"It appears," stated the doctor, "that Palo Huston was shot by a party unknown, and later came to his death from an accidental fall. The bullet was not necessarily fatal."

"The sheriff admits shootin' at him," emphasized Bonn.

"The sheriff," said Dusty slowly, "shoots a .45. Palo Huston was shot with a .38."

There was a shuffling of feet in the audience. A great percentage of them were carrying .38 caliber guns.

"How long you been wearing a .45?" asked Bonn.

"Ever since I left the Cross Anchor," replied Dusty.

Without leaving their seats, the jury adopted the findings of Dr. Bevin and the inquest was over. As far as Calumet was concerned the death of Palo Huston was a closed incident. Why bother over the demise of a man of his caliber? In the words of the majority of the cattlemen, "He got what was comin' to him."

There was one man at the rear of the crowd, who had listened to the evidence, and who was one of the first to leave the room. He was an undersized, weazened man, with the thin face of a ferret, scraggly hair, which hung down over his forehead, almost concealing a pair of ape-like eyes. When he opened his mouth it disclosed a few ill-shaped, yellow teeth, which grew in such a way that it appeared that the man was holding something in his mouth.

He was dressed in a coarse, black shirt, overalls and well-worn bat-winged chaps, and his sombrero was a shapeless thing of black felt, with a chin-strap of whang-leather, greasy from much handling. His thin waist was circled with a wide cartridge belt, which hung low over his right hip, and his tied-down holster sagged from the weight of a heavy single-action Colt pistol.

He had been drinking heavily and seemed uncertain in his walk, but he missed none

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of the testimony. Outside the place, he went slowly up the sidewalk and sat down in front of the Eagle River stage office. The rest of the crowd separated, going their respective ways; most of them heading for Sapphire Smalley's place.

Bonn, the Ramseys and Stella Magruder crossed the street to the hitch-rack, where their horses were tied. Dusty stood in the doorway of the doctor's office and watched them. He wanted to talk with Stella, but did not want to be snubbed in front of Bonn and the Ramsevs.

Weary came up to him and motioned up the street.

"Snag Shirey is drunk and settin' alone up there."

Dusty glanced up the street and nodded, as he recognized the former employer of Palo Huston.

"Danged old buzzard," grunted Weary. "Mebbe he's tryin' to feel sorry for himself. He ain't spoke but fifteen words since he hic Calumet."

"Fifteen?" queried Dusty.

"Uh-huh. Asked for whisky fifteen times!"

Weary went on into the office. Dusty swung away from the door and went up the sidewalk toward Snag Shirey. He knew that Shirey was drunk; knew that he was an ignorant, cold-blooded fiend when sober—and whisky does not soften men of that nature.

Shirey squinted up at him, as Dusty sat down beside him. Across the street, Stella was talking with young Ramsey, while Bonn and the other Ramsey were coming across the street toward the store. They looked sharply at Dusty and Snag Shirey, but neither of them spoke.

"How's things with yuh, Snag?" asked Dusty.

"Awright."

"Lotsa stock running on the upper ranges?" asked Dusty.

Shirey shuffled his feet in the dust, but did not reply.

"Understand that Bonn's takin' some fellers in to stay at yore place to hunt deer."

"Thasso?" Shirey spat dryly and did not appear interested.

"I wonder who shot Palo Huston."

"Yeah?"

"You don't talk much, do yuh," observed Dusty, grinning. "Palo Huston ran out of talk and bleated like a sheep. I wonder if you'd do that, 'f I asked yuh a few more questions."

"Whatcha mean?" Shirey squinted closely at Dusty, and appeared interested.

"Like a sheep," explained Dusty. "Baa-a-a-a. Just like that. Whatcha suppose made Palo bleat thataway?"

Shirey looked away from Dusty and appeared to consider the question. Bonn and the elder Ramsey came out of the store and down the sidewalk, stepping down just beyond Shirey, who looked up at Bonn.

"We'll likely show up at your place t'morrow, Shirey," stated Bonn.

"Awright," nodded Shirey, and the two men went on.

Bonn looked keenly at Dusty, who grinned widely, and as they got about halfway across the street, Dusty cupped his hands around his mouth and bleated like a sheep—

"Baa-a-a-a-a!"

Bonn whirled on his heel, but Dusty had dropped his hands and appeared to be in close conversation with Snag Shirey. Bonn turned back quickly and went on toward the hitch-rack.

Shirey was looking closely at Dusty, and for a moment a ghost of a smile seemed to flash across his homely face; a slight upward lift of the thin lips, which disclosed a yellowed tooth, like the fang of a wolf. Then Snag Shirey got to his feet and went across to the saloon, weaving a trifle in his walk. When he reached the sidewalk he turned his head and looked back at Dusty but went on into the saloon.

Bonn and his party mounted and rode out of town; none of them paying any attention to Dusty, who leaned against a porch-post and rolled a cigaret. For some reason he was not jealous of young Ramsey, who was riding very close to Stella. He went back to his office and found Weary reading a stack of old reward notices, which he had dug up in a closet.

Dusty told him of sending the message to Searchlight, and handed Weary the reply from Sheriff Wilson. Weary read it slowly and handed it back to Dusty.

"What do yuh think?" queried Dusty seriously.

"I think," said Weary slowly, "that Searchlight folks must be a-trustin' bunch of pelicans and fond of knick-knacks."

"I just been wonderin'," reflected Dusty, "kinda wonderin'."

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"Thinkin'?" queried Weary.

"This job requires thinkin', Weary."

"Yeah," sarcastically, "and if yuh stop to think—somebody's goin' to shoot yuh."

"You want to quit the job, Weary?"

"No, I don't want to quit, but I don't want yuh to ask me to do any thinkin', Dusty. I ain't no *Sherlock Holmes,* which goes around deductin' about things. I'm just a deputy—pure and simple."

"That last part sure fits yuh, cowboy. I'll do the thinkin' for both of us."

"All right. But you'll excuse me if I do my own runnin' and dodgin', Dusty. Jist thinkin' of these Sticky Ropes has got me doin' a flip-flop every time anybody even spits behind me; and if you'll do my thinkin' for me, mebbe I can git my nerves into shape agin."

Dusty grinned widely. In spite of Weary's admitted fear of the Sticky Ropes Dusty knew that his lanky deputy, in the parlance of the range, was just plumb loaded with guts. Few brave men admit bravery; few cowards will admit fear.

Weary continued to look over the bunch of old reward notices, and Dusty studied one of them, as he rolled a smoke. It was a small reward for a cattle rustler, and was signed by Sheriff Claypool, of Carson County. The reward offer was of recent date.

Dusty got to his feet and walked over to the opposite wall, where several old maps were hanging. He studied the map closely for a few moments, grinned softly and went back to the table, where he folded up the reward notice and put it in his pocket. Weary glanced up at him.

"Yuh never can tell what you'll find in these old notices."

"That's right," nodded Dusty. "Yuh never can tell."

IT WAS two uneventful days later that Dusty decided to ride out to the Cross Anchor ranch. As an excuse, he told Weary that the Mission-Cross gray needed riding out, but Weary grinned widely and watched him saddle.

The gray humped and flinched under the weight of the saddle and the pull of the cinching, but did not offer to buck. It seemed to realize that its last bucking effort had brought on disaster.

Dusty rode slowly out of town, but soon shook the gray into a swift gallop along the dusty road. He noted the length of stride, the easy swing, which carried them along at a mile-eating pace, without effort. Suddenly he leaned forward and spoke to the gray, which snorted, as if in reply, and began to fairly spurn the road.

Dusty grinned widely and patted the gray's neck.

"Gray bronc', it takes blood to do that stuff. Yore mammy or daddy wasn't no cow-pony. Yore a ghost horse, that's what yuh are! Take it easy!"

Dusty settled back in his saddle and the gray eased back to the swinging gallop again. There was no lost motion, no jerking; it was like the slowing down of a well-oiled engine.

"All horse," chuckled Dusty. "Runnin' horse. We may not be able to catch the Sticky Ropes, but they'll never catch us, y'betcha."

Scott Magruder was sitting on the porch of the ranch-house when Dusty rode up, and he squinted closely at the gray horse. Dusty swung down and came up on the steps, before either of them said a word.

"I reckon," observed Scott, "that I gave away somethin'."

"Yuh sure did," grinned Dusty. "How's everythin', Scott?"

"All right," nodded Scott. "Least I reckon she is. Was the last time I seen her."

Dusty grinned and rolled a smoke.

"Did Bonn and his friends get away, Scott?"

"Yeah, they're some'ers out in the mountains back of Shirey's place, I reckon. I've listened to deer huntin' stories until I'm all fed up on venison."

"What do yuh know about the Ramseys?" queried Dusty.

"Not much. I know they had the nerve to offer to buy the Cross Anchor for about half what it's worth."

"Thasso? Didn't want it very bad, did they?"

"Not half-bad," grinned Scott. "If my ankle had been real good, I reckon I'd 'a' kicked him."

"Where's Ma Magruder today?"

"Takin' a nap. Now ask me where Stell is, Dusty. She went ridin' a while ago—hour or so. I kinda think she's stuck on that young Ramsey."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Don't seem to faze you any."

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"Stell is old enough to know what she wants."

"Like —— she is!" snorted Scott. "No woman ever gets old enough to know what she wants."

"Well," grinned Dusty, "yuh don't need to get mad at me, Scott. I never asked Stell to marry me."

Scott grunted indignantly and filled his pipe. As a matrimonial agent he found himself a failure. He had hoped for a rise out of Dusty when he mentioned young Ramsey, but the rise did not materialize; and Scott was really just a bit worried for fear that Stella might want to marry young Ramsey.

Suddenly Dusty's attention was attracted by a horse and rider, which came swiftly down the point of a low hog-back ridge and into the dusty road, where they proceeded to leave a high-flung cloud of dust in their wake, as they came swiftly toward the Cross Anchor.

"Somebody's in a hurry," remarked Dusty.

Scott got up from his chair and grasped the railing of the porch. A moment later the rider swerved through the open gate and galloped toward the house.

"It's Stell!" grunted Scott. "What's she racin'——"

The girl jerked her mount to a stop almost against the porch, and fairly fell out of the saddle. Dusty was off the porch and down to her as she hit the ground.

"Rustlers!" she panted, grasping him by the arm. "Look!"

She turned and pointed at her horse, which was blowing heavily. Across the hip of her sorrel was a jagged, bloody furrow, where a bullet had plowed just through the skin.

"They—they took a whack at me!" she blurted. "Several whacks, but that's the only one to hurt anything."

"Where were they?" asked Dusty.

"On that big flat across Cedar Cañon," explained Stella. "I came up one of the draws and ran into a bunch of cattle, which were being driven pretty fast. They were cleaning the whole range, as far as I could see. I rode out of the draw and saw a lot more cattle, all traveling the same way. When I rode further out to see what was going on, they began to shoot at me; so I went back down the draw, and I went fast, too."

"Didja see any of the rustlers?" asked Dusty.

"I never stopped to look," declared Stella.

Dusty turned to Scott.

"Got a rifle, Scott?"

"Y'betcha. Shells and all in there by the fife-place."

Dusty secured the gun and swung on to his horse. Stella mounted and spurred in beside him.

"You ain't goin' along, Stell," stated Dusty.

"Is that so? Let me tell you this much, Dusty Corbett: I'm going, if I have to ride alone."

"What did I tell yuh?" yelled Scott. "They never get old enough to have any sense."

Dusty's reply was to jerk his sombrero lower over his eyes and speak to the tall gray horse. Out of the gate they pounded, with Stella urging her horse to keep up with the gray.

"Where's Shorty Miles?" yelled Dusty over his shoulder.

"Went to Calumet this mornin'," answered Stella.

Dusty held the gray to a swinging gallop and let Stella pass him and lead the way up through the broken hills. There were no cattle in sight as they pounded along the side of a hill and headed for Cedar Cañon, about two miles away.

They rode cautiously down into the heavily wooded cañon and out the other side, without seeing any cattle nor any sight of the rustlers. There were no cattle in sight on the big flat, but Dusty knew that it would be impossible to run the cattle for any great length of time, and that they were not far behind the drive.

Beyond the big flat was another succession of breaks, and as they topped the first rise, Dusty saw a man ahead of them. Dusty had stopped his horse on the top of the rise, but Stella did not ride to the crest until the man had turned and disappeared in the opposite direction.

"Rear guard," pronounced Dusty, shifting the rifle to a handy position. "I'll rear-guard him, if he thinks he can block me from findin' out things. You better stay out of this, Stell."

"Since when did you get the right to tell me what to do?" demanded Stella, riding in close to him.

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"Aw, shucks!" groaned Dusty. "I don't want yuh to get hurt. Bustin' into rustlers ain't no place for a lady."

Dusty's gray had swung into a faster gallop, and now Dusty spoke softly and leaned forward. He glanced over his shoulder and saw with satisfaction that Stella and her horse were falling further and further behind. If he was headed for trouble he had decided to get into it in time to give her plenty of warning.

At break-neck speed he raced over the broken country, with the gray running like a deer. Dusty stood high in his stirrups, swinging the Winchester in one hand. He had no plan of attack; no idea of what he was going to do beyond the fact that he was going to overtake the stolen herd. Suddenly he saw a steer backed defiantly against a tall granite outcropping, tired out and belligerent from the swift drive. The herd must be close now.

He glanced back. Stella was about two hundred yards behind him now; her horse tiring fast after its former run from the rustlers' fire.

Over the crest of a ridge went Dusty and beyond him was a long slope covered with sage and mesquite, broken here and there with clumps of stunted pine. At the bottom of this slope he could see part of the herd, which was just starting up the other side.

A bullet whistled past him, as he jerked up his horse, and he saw a dismounted man running through the mesquite, as if to get behind him. Dusty shot at him, but his aim was too hurried.

Another shot came from almost behind him and he whirled in his saddle just in time to feel a crashing blow, which fairly lifted him out of his saddle. As he fell, men seemed to rise up from among the mesquite between him and the crest of the last hill, and into them came Stella, trying to stop her winded horse.

It was after sundown when Dusty Corbett regained consciousness. The awakening was painful in the extreme. His head pained him greatly and he peered out of eyes which seemed mere slits, so badly were they swollen.

For some little time he did not move. He was still dazed, and the events of the day were still a hazy dream. He tried to lift an arm, but seemed paralyzed. A rope was cutting into the flesh of his chest. He seemed to be half-hanging to a small tree, and investigation disclosed the fact that there was a rope under his arms, which half-suspended him.

He dug his heels into the dirt and loosened the rope sufficiently for him to turn facing the tree. His hands and arms gradually became part of his anatomy and he was able to untie the rope. There was another rope around his neck, and as he removed this his hands became sticky. It was difficult for him to see clearly, but he knew that this was the trade-mark of the Sticky Rope gang.

He felt of his head, which was stiff with dried blood, and his exploring fingers encountered a wide gash in his forehead about two inches above the bridge of his nose.

"Hit me plumb between the eyes!" he told himself dazedly and sat down on the ground to think it over. His head throbbed and extreme nausea overcame him, but he fought against it.

"They thought I was dead," he told himself. "Thought that bullet went plumb through, and they hung the rope on me."

His holster was empty. He got to his feet and tried to investigate his surroundings, but his swollen eyes precluded any chance of seeing more than a few yards.

"Well," he decided, "they never packed me over the divide, that's a cinch; so all I've got to do is to go down hill to strike the valley."

He started down the slope, stumbling along drunkenly, when he suddenly remembered that Stella had been with him. His shocked brain worked slowly, but he remembered that she had been quite a distance behind him. Had she heard the shots in time to swerve back to safety?

He remembered now that he had ridden pell mell into an ambush. The rear guard had seen to that. Dusty cursed softly.

"No wonder they couldn't shoot out m' brains," he groaned bitterly. "I never had none."

THERE was no use searching for Stella, until he found out whether or not she had gone back to the Cross Anchor; so he started on down the hill again.

It was dark when Dusty staggered into the ranch-house of the Cross Anchor. Scott Magruder met him at the door and helped him to a chair, while Mrs. Magruder and

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Shorty Miles crowded in close and begged for an explanation. Stella had not come home, but Dusty's gray bronco had drifted into the corral gate about fifteen minutes ahead of Dusty.

"My ——, yo're a horrible sight!" exclaimed Shorty. "By all rights, yuh ought to be dead."

Ma Magruder, putting her own worries aside, bathed Dusty's head with warm water and soft towels, while Scott, who was also practical, fed Dusty regular doses of whisky. In broken sentences Dusty told of the ambush and of how the rustlers had thought him dead; but he had not the slightest idea what had become of Stella.

"But they won't harm her," insisted Scott. "In this day and age yuh can't steal wimmin'. Why would they kidnap her? ——! Why, the whole country would rise up agin 'em for a thing like that."

"The country," said Dusty bitterly, "ain't done a dang thing to shake 'em loose, Scott."

"I know; but why would they steal a girl? It ain't noways reasonable, Dusty."

"Sure it ain't," Dusty shook his gore-stained head and blinked painfully.

"I don't reckon they had any idea of stealin' Stella, Scott. I remember that the rear guard didn't see her, 'cause she was down the hill a ways when he rode away. She was behind me when they started shootin', and I figure that she rode plumb into 'em before she could stop."

"And they had to capture her?" exclaimed Mrs. Magruder. "Do you think she knew them, Dusty?"

Dusty nodded. "I reckon so, Ma. They had to steal her."

"Then they won't do her any harm," Scott reassured them. "They'll hold her until they have their getaway framed, and then turn her loose."

"Yeah?" Dusty was unconvinced.

"Don't you believe that, Dusty?" asked Ma Magruder nervously.

"They was Sticky Ropes, Ma—and it's just a question as to whether they're ready to leave or not. One girl ain't never goin' to put the run on that gang."

"What can we do?" demanded Shorty. "Gotta do somethin'."

"Y'betcha," agreed Dusty. "And we don't want everybody in the country in on it, Shorty. Do you know where yuh can get hold of Jack Bonn? He knows that country back in there. Old Snag knows it, too. Do yuh think yuh can locate 'em?"

"Well, I sure can try," replied Shorty. "They said they was goin' to Shirey's place."

"Pull out right now," ordered Dusty. "Get Bonn and old Snag, if yuh can, and bring 'em down here to the ranch. We'll work out from here; *sabe?*"

"How about the Ramseys?"

"Let 'em come along if they want to, Shorty. I don't reckon they'll be worth anythin' to us; but bring 'em along."

"What are you going to do?" asked Mrs. Magruder.

"Goin' t' town," declared Dusty. "I've gotta get Weary and some artillery."

"You ain't in no shape to ride," objected Scott. "Man, you've got a busted head and yore eyes look like Easter-eggs."

"But m' heart is in the right place," grinned Dusty, peering around for his hat. "I may not be handsome, but I sure have got a lovin' disposition. S'long."

THE tall gray was tied to the corral fence, none the worse for the encounter with the rustlers. As Dusty swung into the saddle he saw Shorty Miles saddling up down at the barn. They were losing no time. Dusty whirled the gray out through the wide gate and straightened out on the long, dim road toward Calumet.

"Need a li'l speed, bronc'," stated Dusty, and the tall gray snorted its answer, as the gray ribbon of road seemed to reel in beneath them.

It was just before midnight when Dusty and Weary, leading a packed horse, rode away from Calumet. Dusty had come secretly into town, found Weary at the office, and now they were leaving without mentioning the fact to a single soul. Both of them were armed with rifles and in the pack was food enough for a week.

"We're goin' to hit the Cross Anchor kinda early," remarked Weary as they left the road for the Bald Butte trail.

"Not so early," replied Dusty, and not another word was spoken until they struck the bottom of the buttes and Dusty drew rein.

"Weary, there's an old Injun trail that circles the bottom of these hills and comes in through the breaks at the top of Cedar Canon. Know anythin' about it?"

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"Seems like I've heard of it, Dusty; but I reckon its wiped out by now."

Dusty dismounted and led his horse along the trail until he found the spot he was looking for.

"Here's where she starts," he announced as he swung back onto his horse. "We'll try her out."

"Ain'tcha goin' to the Cross Anchor, Dusty?"

"Not t'night, cowboy."

A dim moon aided them in keeping to the old trail, which was unused, except for an occasional range steer. It wound in and out of the ravines, taking an easy grade toward the high breaks beyond. It was slow traveling, and Weary wondered why Dusty was taking this dim trail instead of going around the road. The distance would only be a trifle longer.

About three hours later they reached the top of the divide and swung around the head of Cedar Cañon. A cold wind was blowing from the Little Rockies and both men humped lower in their mackinaw coats.

Dusty led the way straight to where he had been ambushed, but was unable to find the spot where he had been tied to the tree. Much of the swelling had been reduced around his eyes, and a wide cotton bandage circled his forehead, which still throbbed from the impact of the heavy bullet.

They rode to the bottom of the swale, where Dusty had seen the cattle, and it was not difficult for them to follow the spoor of the driven herd.

"They can't drive 'em far," stated Dusty. "They didn't have more than three hours of daylight left when they got me, and that cut in on their time. We'll go kinda easy."

"Yo're danged right we'll go easy," agreed Weary. "I sure don't want 'em to knock on my head with a bullet."

The trail of the herd led straight back into the mountains, climbing higher all the time, swinging around the head of the cañons, where the mesquite and sage gave way to jack-pines and small firs.

Once the gray lunged sidewise and whirled around, as a mountain lion flashed across an opening in front of them and snarled its defiance. Farther on, a black-tail doe crossed their path, bounded away like a shadow and stopped in a low thicket of jack-pines to watch them pass.

On the next cañon the herd trail turned and went angling down, instead of cutting around the top. The two men drew rein and studied the wide cañon.

"You ever been here before, Dusty?" asked Weary softly.

"I don't reckon I have."

"I have," declared the lanky one. "This is Hardpan Creek, Dusty. She cuts through solid rock."

"Hardpan Creek? The one the Injuns say——"

"That's her," declared Weary. "Heads in Diaub lake, below the wind caves."

"Ever been there, Weary?"

"Sure! I've been around the lower end of the lake."

"Ain't there an old trail between the lake and the caves?"

"Yeah, I reckon there is, but nobody ever uses it. Aw, I ain't superstitious, Dusty, but——"

"Just cautious," suggested Dusty.

"Well, mebbe that's it. The Injuns swear that no man can cross between the caves and the lake. 'Pears that the Wind God gets angry and blows 'em into the lake. Shucks, yuh couldn't get an Injun within a mile of there."

"Why specify Injuns, Weary?"

"Well, I reckon that's true, too. None of the old-timers go up there. The —— place is spooky, Dusty. That lake never ripples, and when the wind blows real hard yuh can hear the caves kinda moanin'."

"Didja ever see them caves?"

"Nope."

"How do yuh know there is any caves?"

"How do I know there's a New York? How do I know there's oceans?" retorted Weary. "I ain't never seen 'em, but I'm willin' to believe what I hear."

"Injun superstition!" exclaimed Dusty. "Old men's tales. Shucks!"

"All right, all right!" resignedly. "Write yore own ticket, Hard-head. If a bullet won't kill yuh, I don't reckon yuh need to fear the wrath of the Wind God. I dunno a dang thing about the caves, but I don't blame the Injuns for namin' the lake after the devil."

"Where does Hardpan Creek empty?" asked Dusty.

"It don't—it just sinks out of sight. She ain't so much of a stream, but she runs about two miles down the cañon from the

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waterfall out of the lake, and then she kinda soaks into the rocks. The cañon kinda closes up, and where she comes on to the flat country you'd hardly know it was much of a cañon. I was in here huntin' deer two years ago."

"Well," observed Dusty, "it ain't more than an hour or so until daylight; so I reckon we'll cross the Hardpan and see what's beyond."

They rode slowly down into the box cañon, which seemed to be carved out of solid stone. There was little foliage on this account, and no water. Once across the cañon, they began a long climb, which took them angling toward the head of the cañon.

There was no trail now; not even the tracks of the herd, but it was difficult to determine just where the herd had left the bottom. But Dusty knew there were but three ways for the herd to go—up the cañon, down the cañon, or across. To go down the cañon would bring them out on the lower range-land, and would be of no benefit to the rustlers. To go up the cañon would bring them to Diaub lake, which was surrounded with towering cliffs. Dusty had heard of this place, and knew it to be a *cul de sac*. No, there was only one reasonable place to look for the herd, and that was across the cañon.

Dusty did not tear his hair and call down curses upon the outlaws who had kidnapped Stella Magruder. In the first place, he realized that the rustlers had not stolen her through any desire on their part to acquire her. No doubt, he thought, she rode in on them just after he had been shot, and they were forced to detain her because she had recognized them.

Just what they would do with her was a question. She was interfering with their plans, and in case she had recognized some of them, it would not be wise on their part to release her. But Dusty felt sure that she was in no immediate danger, and he also felt that the finding of the cattle would furnish a clew to her whereabouts.

Daylight found them on the crest of the divide, high up among the cliffs. Dusty had intended keeping lower down, but the character of the country had forced them to higher levels. For an hour or more they wound in and out of the old lava-formed cliffs, until they finally reached a spot where it was impossible to continue with the horses.

"And this," said Dusty sorrowfully, "is the end of the chapter. I dunno what the —— we ever came this far for, unless it was to hunt mountain-sheep."

"We're high up, cowboy," grinned Weary, "and the world kinda slides off quick on every side. Lemme see——"

Weary walked out to the edge, where he squatted and studied the opposite side of the mountain.

"Dusty, I ain't plumb sure, but I kinda feel that we're in them high cliffs above the wind caves. I betcha yuh could jump off right here and almost take a bath in Diaub Lake."

Dusty rolled a cigaret and considered things in general. Then he dismounted and tied his horse to a gnarled snag.

"Whatcha aim to do?" queried Weary, as he tied his horse to another snag and looped the lead-rope around the saddle-horn.

"Kinda curious," grinned Dusty. "I've heard all kinds of fool things about these caves, and I never had a chance to investigate before."

"Shucks, yuh can't get down to 'em. I've looked up at the cliffs from the lake, and you'd have to have wings like a buzzard to make the trip, Dusty."

"Thasso?"

Dusty drew his rifle from the boot, and slung it under his arm.

"C'm on, long feller. Yuh don't have to wear wings to fall with, and she's down—not up."

Weary picked up his rifle.

"I ain't got no sense," he declared. "Not a —— lick of sense. I swore to uphold the law, I did. But I never said I was goin' to get up on top of the world to do it. Yuh made me say, 'So help me, Gawd,' but there wasn't nothin' said about climbin' half-way to get His help. I came out here to kill a rustler—not to be a mountain goat."

"What do yuh reckon we better do?" grinned Dusty.

"Satisfy yore curiosity," grunted Weary. "Lead on!"

It was a difficult journey across the lava cliffs, where a misstep might prove fatal. Ages ago a volcano had lifted out a mighty mass of molten rock, which had spewed over the mountain ridge; piling up like a gigantic rock wall; cooling to the texture of melted glass.

And it was along this great wall that

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Dusty and Weary crawled. On either side was a sheer drop of a hundred feet to other ledges, which broke away like gigantic steps to the cañon below.

"If a feller thinks he's kinda big in the world," panted Weary, "he can come up here and find out just how danged small he is, y'betcha."

Dusty hung his feet over the edge and rolled a cigaret, while Weary edged onward a few feet and considered the other side of the cliff. Far below him was sort of a pot-hole in the cliffs and beyond that was a rocky cañon, which seemed to lead out to the timber-line.

Dusty crawled over and sprawled beside Weary. Beyond them, the cliffs swung rather sharply to the right, and Weary pointed out the fact that this was the spot where the cliffs turned to circle the head of Hardpan Cañon.

"We're sure above Diaub Lake," he declared, and added—

"A danged long ways above."

Dusty was studying the formation of the cliffs beyond them and paid no attention to Weary's statement.

"I betcha we can get down the cliffs over there," declared Dusty, pointing at a crevice beyond.

"That's sure fine," applauded Weary dryly. "But what in thunder good would that do us? We'd be on the wrong side of the range, don'tcha see?"

"Couldn't we circle the side of the mountain below the cliffs and get back to the horses?"

"Yeah?" Weary pointed to another series of cliffs, which extended far down the mountain to their left. "We might make a thirty-mile circle, Dusty."

Dusty grinned and crawled ahead to where the crevice broke their chance of further progress. It was six feet across, with a slanting surface on the far side.

"Prettiest place I ever seen, to commit suicide," stated Weary. "Jump the crevice and skid backwards. Be a cinch."

"Here's the cinch," replied Dusty, pointing downward. "We can go down here easy."

He rolled over, slid off the edge and dropped lightly to the shelf below them, where he studied the downward path.

"We can get up here again, if we want to," he called up to the skeptical Weary. "Come on."

Swearing at Dusty for being seventeen kinds of fool, Weary followed. From shelf to shelf they dropped down the irregular crevice. At times they went down, with their elbows and knees bracing against the sides, until the crevice widened into another series of broken ledges.

It took them about two hours to make the descent, and they arrived at the bottom with elbows and knees bleeding and clothes torn, but glad to be back to earth again. From where they landed the mountain sloped gently back into the heavy timber; a great unused range, which broke back to the foot-hills of another county.

Dusty led the way back along the edge of the cliffs to where the rocky cañon opened on to the mountain slope. This was a fairly wide, box cañon, hewn by nature out of the solid lava rock. They skirted the edge of this around to where it opened on to the mountain, and the cliffs echoed Dusty's yelp of joy.

"Cows!" he yelled. "Sufferin' sunfish! Look!"

He pointed at the upward raise of ground beyond the mouth of the cañon, where hundreds of cloven hooves had cut deeply into the soft earth.

"Whatcha know?" gasped Weary. "Them is cow tracks, as sure as the Lord made small, sour apples, Dusty. What are they——"

"C'mon," grunted Dusty, and raced back up the rock cañon.

EVERYWHERE was unmistakable sign that cattle had been driven through the rocky cleft, although there were no hoof-marks. A hundred yards beyond, the cañon opened into the pot-hole, which they could see above, but which was a rocky amphitheater, at least three hundred feet across.

At the far side of this, straight into the side of the cliff, extended the cañon, wide enough to drive a wagon through. The two men clambered over the uneven floor and entered the cañon, which ran straight for a few hundred feet and then began to angle back and forth.

As far as they could see, the cleft ran straight to the top of the cliffs, but angling in such a way that no daylight came through. There were side clefts, wide enough to squeeze through, but they kept to the main cañon.

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Suddenly there came a moaning sound, like the starting of a ponderous machine. Dusty and Weary stopped and looked at each other.

"The Wind God!" whispered Weary. "This must be——"

"He must be mixin' up a cyclone," observed Dusty dryly "Let's go in and see how he does it."

And without waiting for Weary to agree to such a thing, Dusty started ahead, with his rifle ready for quick work. The sound had changed a trifle now, and was more like swift running water, although the moaning continued to a certain degree.

They swung around an angle in the cañon, and ahead of them the sunlight shafted in along the right-hand wall.

"Daylight," grunted Dusty in amazement. "We haven't gone all the way through the danged mountain yet!"

The Wind God's machine was not making so much noise now, as the two men passed around the corner of the cliff and emerged into sunlight. For a moment they stopped and looked at the scene before them.

They were standing at the edge of another amphitheater-like place, larger than the other, and with the greater part of it roofed over. It looked like a great cave, with part of the roof fallen in, and inside this great ventilated cave were at least two hundred head of cattle.

From the opposite side was a continuation of the wide rocky cleft, and out of this were coming more cattle. Dusty and Weary leaned against the rock wall and studied this scene. There were Bar-O-Bar stock from the ranges East of Calumet; Wagon-Wheel and Banjo brands from Fisher Creek, a few Cross-Anchor and Circle S cows.

"The country is sure well represented," observed Dusty, grinning softly. "I thought this was the place that the wind came from, but I finds that it's the place where the cows go to."

"Look out!" snapped Weary as he whirled back into the cleft and yanked at Dusty's sleeve.

Pwee-e-e-e!

A bullet riccocheted off the rock where Dusty had leaned, while the report of a rifle crashed with thunderous echoes. A man had come out of the opposite cleft and had fired at first sight of them. After firing, he had darted back inside the cleft out of sight.

"Whatcha know about that?" queried Dusty. "Mebbe that's yore Wind God, Weary; and he's angry with us."

"He had on a blue shirt," grunted Weary foolishly.

"Must be the Wind God then," grinned Dusty. "All them kinda gods wears blue shirts."

They peered out, but there was no sign of the man. Dusty hung his hat on his rifle barrel and shoved this out, but either the man was gone, or he was not to be fooled.

"We're in a sweet place," declared Weary. "I betcha that was one of the rustlers, and they've got a cinch to keep us where we are."

"We can go back, can't we?" queried Dusty.

"S'pose they sneak in behind us; what then?"

"You sure do think sweet thoughts, cowboy," declared Dusty. "How would they know? That jasper out there ain't got no chance to sneak in on us, has he?"

"Mebbe there's others out on the other side. Ain't nobody goin' to stop 'em from comin' in the same way we did."

"What do yuh reckon we ought to do—shoot ourselves?" asked Dusty sarcastically.

"Well, yuh gotta look at these things—" began Weary in defense of his argument, but Dusty had swung away from the wall into the open and called—

"Come on, Weary!"

A NUMBER of the cattle had drifted into a compact mass in front of the opposite opening, and Dusty was running to gain the opposite wall before the herd broke away from that spot. Weary raced along behind him, while cattle scattered on either side.

They brought up against the wall, panting from the run, but no shot had been fired at them. Weary drew in gulps of air and threw a rock at some of the frightened cattle, which had swung in close to them.

They were now in a position where the rustler would have to expose himself to shoot at them. Dusty took his rifle in his left hand and drew his six-shooter. He expected close-range work now, and did not want to depend on the longer gun.

They worked cautiously around to the entrance, but there was no sign of the man

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in the blue shirt. Dusty considered the cleft, which angled out of view beyond them. It would be an excellent ambush. The cleft was not over eight feet wide on the bottom.

"I don't like this proposition," declared Dusty softly. "They've got a cinch on wipin' us out in here. You keep about fifty feet behind me, Weary; and if they are layin' for us, you'll have a chance to either help me out or to get away."

"Aw-w-wl" protested Weary. "That ain't no way to do. You lemme go ahead, Dusty."

"Nope. The county elected me to do this kinda work, and yo're only m' hired man. Let's go."

Dusty walked slowly around the corner, and after a moment Weary followed. The cleft was but a repetition of the one on the other side of the big cattle-cave. It angled badly and Dusty was never able to see more than fifty feet ahead. The sounds of the bawling cattle came to them, and Dusty grinned over the noise-machine of the Wind God.

It seemed miles out of the cleft; miles of half-light, in which they expected momentarily to be fired upon. Dusty had relaxed his tension by this time, but was no less cautious. At times he grinned over his shoulder at Weary, who was moving in closer all the time.

The light began to get better and Dusty moved slower and with more caution. Suddenly he rounded a projection and before him he could see the fringe of trees beyond. It was only a few feet out to the mountain side. He went out slowly, bent low and taking advantage of every point of rock. He was looking for the man in the blue shirt who he knew was not far away.

He worked out to a fringe of bushes, and just beyond him stood this man, looking eagerly down the cañon. He held a rifle in both hands and seemed to be trying to locate some one. Dusty did not want to have to kill him, but he did want to capture him.

He motioned to Weary to stay there, and began working slowly out behind him. The man had evidently decided that they would never come on through the cleft, after he had fired the shot at them, and was not at all concerned with things behind him.

Dusty worked in close behind him before he spoke.

"Leggo that gun!"

Dusty's order fairly crackled in the ear of the blue-shirted man, and he whirled quickly. It was Wharton, the bartender, who, Dusty believed, had given him the knock-out drops in Smalley's saloon.

At the sight of Dusty, Wharton started back, which took him to the very edge of the incline. He seemed to slip downward, whirled as if trying to get away, and Dusty dove into him.

For a moment they spun around, grasping at each other, and then the earth seemed to slip from under them. Like a flash Dusty realized what had happened. The steep hillside was all shale rock, and they had started a miniature landslide.

There was no way to check their speed; no way to stop until they reached more secure formation. It was like sitting on a loose piece of slate and sliding off a roof. Faster and faster they went, until they shot into space and seemed for a moment to hang suspended in the air, but in that short space of time, Dusty got a flash of what was below and he knew that they were hurtling off into Diaub Lake.

And in that short space of time he realized that the old Indian superstition had been caused by just such a thing. The treacherous shale rock had slid away with some Indians, and the survivors had believed it to be the work of an evil spirit.

The speed with which they were going and the angle of their departure was all that saved them, for they did a slanting dive into not over four feet of water. Tradition had said that it was a bottomless lake, but Dusty realized that tradition was not always truth.

Their holds had been broken by the fall, and Dusty came upright in the water, coughing, wheezing, but grappling for Wharton, who had had all the wind knocked from his lungs by hitting the water. He managed to get Wharton's head above water, and then looked around.

Tradition had also said that no man could ever get out of that lake, but tradition had only viewed it from one certain spot. Dusty glimpsed a broken place in the sloping, rocky walls, over which they had fallen, and to this place he waded, hauling the half-conscious Wharton with him.

It was, or rather appeared to be, merely a short cleft in the rocks, but Dusty found it to be the entrance to a regular cave. Into

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the mouth of this he dragged Wharton and laid him across a rock. Wharton's gun was in its holster, although he had lost his rifle. Dusty was sans either rifle or pistol; so he lost no time in appropriating Wharton's belt and gun.

Dusty sat down against the wall and tried to find enough dry tobacco to make a smoke. He was still shaky from the fall into the lake and needed a bracer.

"The only danged thing about this spooky lake that's true, is the moisture," he told a limp sack of tobacco.

Came the scrape of leather on rock and Dusty whirled, gun in hand. For a moment he squinted closely, as though not believing his eyes. He looked down at Wharton and back toward the lake, as though trying to solve the mystery, but his eyes came back to the dim entrance to the tunnel, where Stella Magruder was standing, one hand braced against the rocky wall, staring at him.

"Well," remarked Dusty inanely, "there may not be any wind gods around here, but there's everythin' else."

"Dusty!" Stella seemed uncertain of her own voice.

"That's me!" nodded Dusty. "Champeen high-diver of the Big Bear country."

"But, Dusty," she faltered, "you—you——"

She came toward him, as if expecting him to fade into thin air, and he got to his feet before her. She tried to smile, but failed dismally.

"You are not dead?" she whispered.

"I wouldn't bet on it," said Dusty slowly. "I've sure done everythin' I could to pass out."

There was an awkward silence as they looked at each other, and then Dusty grinned widely.

"Stell, I've found out where all the stolen cows have been taken, and I'm goin' to clean up the Sticky Ropes."

Stella turned her head and stared out past the broken rock entrance, where the unruffled waters of Diaub Lake shone like polished jade. Her eyes were wide with suffering and the corners of her mouth twitched, as if her soul were shrieking to explain things that her tongue did not dare to tell.

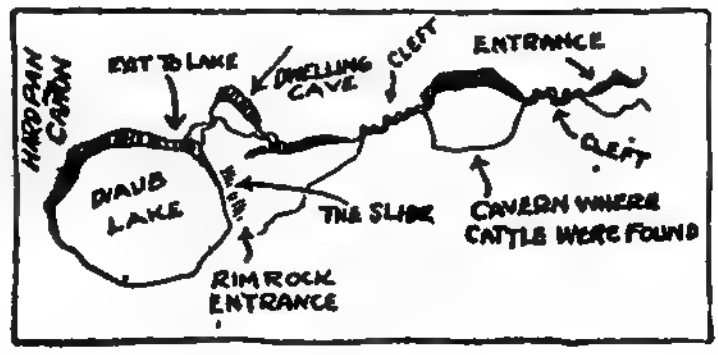
Dusty looked curiously at her and put his hand on her arm.

"Whatsa matter, Stell?"

Still she did not turn her head, and Dusty squinted out across the lake. As far as he could see there was nothing to cause such a steadfast gaze in that direction. He repeated his question, and she turned slowly back to him.

"Dusty, do you—you—" she faltered. "Why do you have to clean up the Sticky Ropes?"

"Why?" Dusty almost squeaked the question. "Why, Stell, they're a bunch



of murderin' rustlers, that's why. They've run a lot of cow-men out of the Big Bear country, and they've stolen a fortune in cattle. I've got 'em where the hair is short right now."

Stella had leaned back against the rocky wall and was nervously arranging her tousled hair. Wharton lifted his head a trifle, but Dusty was watching Stella and did not see him roll slowly over and get to his knees.

"And they stole you, Stell'," stated Dusty. "After they thought they had killed me. I reckon that's a-plenty for me to clean-up on 'em. They was sure a slick bunch, don'tcha know it? They drove the cattle up Hardpan Creek, over the rim-rock at the upper side of Diaub Lake and into that rocky cut, which runs plumb through the cliffs.

"The stock never left a track, and none of the cow-men ever knew that there was a way through the cliffs. It was the old wind caves of the Blackfeet, which opened into Bunchgrass County, and they had a cinch to drive out of the mountains and down to Firebaugh or Hastings."

Dusty laughed heartily over the simplicity of it all, and his laugh was echoed by the scrape and thump of running feet. He whirled in time to see Wharton disappearing into the gloom of the narrow tunnel. Dusty fired once and the bullet whined off the rock, like the shriek of a fiddle-string.

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Stella tried to clutch Dusty's arm, as he sprang past her, but he tore away and ran into the tunnel. He could hear Wharton running ahead of him, but the passage was too narrow for fast work.

Suddenly the cave widened to the proportions of a room, and Dusty saw that it was roughly furnished as a living quarters. Blankets were strewn on the floor, together with boxes and cooking utensils, and in one corner smoldered a small fire. An old barn-lantern was hanging to a rocky projection.

As Dusty dashed into the room he saw Wharton's legs just disappearing up what appeared to be a stairway outlet, and which proved to be a short ladder, leading to the continuation of the cave. Dusty went cautiously up this ladder and raced on through another narrow tunnel, which was very dark.

Then he seemed to feel the jar of a shot and the muffled echo of an explosion. He forced his way around two almost right-angled turnings and fairly fell out into the light of day. He stopped and stared foolishly around. He was out at almost the exact spot where he had tackled Wharton, and, sitting on the ground, nursing his head, was Weary Willis.

Weary looked up at Dusty and his mouth fell open, as if some one had severed his jaw muscles. Weary had a bruised spot over his right eye, which was already swelled to the proportions of an egg.

"Well, I'll be ——!" he snorted. "You're dead, ain't yuh, Dusty?"

"Uh-huh," nodded Dusty. "Turned into a wind god. Did somebody come out here a moment ago, Weary?"

Weary gawped toward the opening and back to Dusty. He nodded violently and rubbed his forehead.

"Yo're danged well right they did! I figured that you was dead; so I was goin' back through the cliffs and climb back to the horses, and I got this far, when a evil spirit hopped out of that wall, knocked me upside down and flitted away through the entrance. I shot at it; but, shucks, there ain't no use shootin' at spirits."

"That was Wharton, who tended bar for Sapphire Smalley," said Dusty. "The feller that handed me the knock-out drops."

"No?" Weary got to his feet and rubbed his head. "Do yuh mean to tell me that I let a bartender walk all over me thataway? By cripes, I'm goin'——."

Weary stared over Dusty's shoulder and blinked rapidly. Stella had come out of the tunnel and was standing within a few feet of them. Weary tore his eyes away from her and looked out toward the entrance. He cleared his throat and hitched up his belt nervously.

"Did he get away, Dusty?" asked Stella softly.

"——!" croaked Weary hoarsely. "I'm glad yuh spoke, Miss Magruder, 'cause I was sure girdin' m' loins for a foot-race. I thought yuh was a ghost."

"Lotta ghosts around here," observed Dusty thoughtfully, panting a trifle from his chase through the caves.

"Did—did he get away?" faltered Stella.

"Yeah, he got away, Stell'; but I've got the deadwood on him, y'betcha."

Weary turned and walked to the edge of the slide above the lake, seeking to get a glimpse of Wharton, leaving Dusty and Stella alone, facing each other.

"I ain't quite sure who they all are, Stell," stated Dusty, after a moment's pause. "But I reckon you can tell me a lot of things, can't yuh?"

Stella brushed a hand across her face, as she stared down at the rocky floor, but looked up at Dusty and shook her head.

"No, I can't tell you anything, Dusty."

"You can't?" Dusty's face was very serious now. "You don't know who brought yuh here, Stell'?"

"I didn't say that, Dusty; I said I couldn't tell you."

"Yeah, I——"

Dusty scratched his tousled hair and squinted into space. It was a trifle beyond his ken.

"Yuh know who brought yuh here, but yuh can't—" Dusty hesitated and the lines about his wide mouth grew tense.

"Stell', yuh mean that yuh love—somebody—who—belongs—to—them—Sticky Ropes? Do yuh—Stell'?"

Her eyes were filled with tears, as she looked at him and nodded slowly.

"More than anything in the world, I think."

"——!" breathed Dusty. "I—I didn't know—that. Somehow—" Dusty turned and stared toward Weary, who was still watching for Wharton—"somehow I kinda hoped——"

Stella stepped in closer and put her hand on his arm.

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"Dusty, you'll do this for me? You'll forget the Sticky Ropes, for my sake?"

Dusty looked closely at her and his eyes dropped to the bosom of his torn shirt, where his badge of office was pinned at an awkward angle. He lifted his right hand and felt of the rough bandage which covered the throbbing mark of a rustler's bullet.

"I—I know they tried to kill you, Dusty," said Stella softly.

"That ain't it," Dusty shook his head. "That's personal, Stell. It ain't what they done to me; it's what I swore I'd do, when I took office. And I reckon a lot of folks are kinda lookin' for me t' make good."

"But, Dusty, won't you do this for my sake. It—it means a—lot, Dusty."

"I reckon the son-of-a-gun got plumb away!" called Weary. "He was goin' fast enough t' be in Canada by this time."

Dusty walked away from Stella and went out to where Weary was still scanning the country. Weary looked back at Stella, leaning against the rocky wall, and then at Dusty's dejected expression.

"Whatsa matter, cowboy?" he half-whispered, seeing that something had gone badly amiss.

"She won't tell me who the Sticky Ropes are," said Dusty, "and she wants me to go away and let 'em alone."

Weary whistled and hitched up his belt. "What'sa big idea, Dusty?"

"Well," Dusty compressed his lips a moment. "Well, she didn't ask me not to tell yuh, Weary; so I reckon yuh better know about it. She loves one of them rustlers."

"Aw-w-w, ——!" Weary fairly exploded.

"Sure is," agreed Dusty. "Worse 'n that, Weary."

"Young Ramsey?"

"I—I never thought of him, but I reckon that's right. But what in thunder had he got to do with the Sticky Ropes? He's a stranger around here."

Stella was coming up to them now, and Weary turned away, as if he did not want to speak to her. For a space of time she stood beside Dusty, looking out over the sun-lit crags beyond the lake.

"I haven't treated you very nicely, Dusty," she said, without turning her head. "I think I always wanted to tease you, and it is hard to ask favors of you now."

"Thass all right—" quickly—"I didn't mind—much, Stell."

"Can't you just ride away and forget what happened yesterday and today, Dusty?"

Dusty looked keenly at her. She was asking him to forget his sworn duty; asking him to forget that a band of thieves and murderers were operating in that land; asking him to do this because she loved one of the thieves. The irony of it all struck Dusty, and he grinned widely.

"You will do this, Dusty?" Stella had seen the grin wreath his wide lips, and she spoke eagerly.

"I reckon," drawled Dusty slowly, "I reckon I'm a —— of a sheriff. C'mon, Weary!"

And without a backward glance Dusty walked slowly back to the main crevice of the wind cave, with Weary following him. At the entrance Dusty looked back. Stella was standing where he had left her, watching them. She waved her hand, but Dusty turned and went into the half-light of the cave, without a sign to her.

Once around the protecting angle of the entrance, Dusty stopped, leaned against the wall and began the manufacture of a cigaret. Weary shifted his rifle to the crook of his elbow, and reached for Dusty's "makin's."

"I've read about danged fools," stated Weary slowly, "but yo're the first one I've ever met, Dusty."

Dusty grinned and lit his cigaret.

"Well, yuh sure picked a champeen f'r a starter, Weary."

"Y'betcha," seriously. "Yuh may be a hero in the mind of that girl, but you'd shoot me f'r what I'm thinkin' about yuh right now, cowboy."

"I believe in free thinkin' m'self," nodded Dusty, squatting down on his heels. "I wish I had that rifle out of the lake, Weary. My six-gun is down there, too. She's a good thing that Wharton used the same caliber six-gun, or I'd be half-out of shells right now."

"Um-m-m," Weary squinted away from the smoke of his cigaret and peered at Dusty.

"Ain't we goin' back to the horses now, Dusty?"

"Nope, not now. There's such a thing as bein' too danged much of a hero."

"You told Stella you was goin' away, didn't yuh?"

"Nope. I told her that I was a —— of a sheriff, and that ain't no lie, Weary."

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Dusty crawled back to the entrance, where he could peer out and see the full sweep of the opening. Weary moved in behind him, grumbling softly.

"What'sa matter?" queried Dusty.

"Hungry. My gosh, we ain't had nothin' t' eat since last night."

"And the pack-horse three hours away," grinned Dusty. "Ne'mind, cowboy. If we get hungry enough we'll sneak back and barbecue a steer. I betcha them hills back there are full of stolen cattle. They must 'a' drove 'em in here and worked 'em slow-like back into that big cave, let 'em get kinda used to things and then shoved 'em out the other side."

"Got any idea who the rustlers are?"

"Jack Bonn is one of 'em, Weary. And I'm thinkin' that the depot agent at Calumet is another. I sent a telegram to Searchlight, askin' about Jack Bonn, and you see the answer I got back. It was signed by a sheriff by the name of Wilson, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, I 'member that, Dusty."

"Well, I found a reward notice at the office, and the sheriff's name in Claypool. The reward was sent out last month and they ain't had no election down there. No, that danged agent faked up that telegram, Weary. And that is what put the deadwood on Mister Bonn.

"I had a hunch that it might be a smart thing to have Shorty Miles ride in and get Bonn and Shirey and take 'em down to the Cross-Anchor, while we investigated things up here. No use buckin' the whole works, unless we have to; and they'd fall for a chance to help me hunt for Stella. They'd get me out in this country and make a sieve out of me."

"You ain't such a danged fool after all," applauded Weary.

"Well, yuh don't need to get too enthusiastic," reprimanded Dusty. "We ain't out of this yet, yuh must remember."

Neither of them were wearing a watch, but the long shadows across the mouth of the rock cañon showed that the sun was almost down. Stella had gone back to the living quarters in the cave, following the disappearance of Dusty and Weary, but now she came out again, walked to the rocks above the lake and appeared to be scanning the country closely. After a few minutes she went back into the cave.

"She's lookin' for 'em to come back," observed Weary.

"Losin' Wharton kinda soured my game," grinned Dusty. "He likely spread the glad tidin's, which will make 'em all kinda go soft-like."

The sun disappeared and darkness came swiftly, blotting out all detail; yet there was no sign of the rustlers. It was getting uncomfortably cool among the rocks and Weary complained audibly.

"Why don't yuh sneak back to the horses and get our blankets?" asked Dusty.

"Go through these danged caves?" queried Weary. "Not me! Climb up to the top of the world in the dark? My gosh, it gives me goose-pimples t' think of it."

It was about an hour later that something seemed to move among the rocks; something that moved slowly along the floor of the entrance and disappeared near the opening to the dwelling-cave.

"One of 'em came back," chuckled Dusty. "He sure snaked his way in this time, and he'll sure be tickled t' know that me and you pulled out quite a while ago."

About five minutes later two figures came out of the cave, carrying a lantern. The yellow light threw grotesque shadows on the high, rocky walls, as the two figures walked to the extreme edge above the lake.

After holding the lantern steady for a moment, the figure holding it began to swing it in circles, causing it to look like a wheel of yellow light. Then the light was extinguished.

"Signalin' the rest of the wind gods," observed Dusty.

It was impossible to see the two figures now, as they blended into the landscape, but ten minutes later came the scrape of metal on stone, the jingle of bit-chains, and over the rim, at the left-hand side, came a number of horsemen. It was impossible to tell their number, but the drone of several voices came to Dusty and Weary's ears.

Then they went noisily across the rocky floor and into the small cave entrance, rattling their spurs and arguing brokenly.

Dusty led the way over to the horses, of which there were five.

"This is Bonn's horse," whispered Dusty, rubbing the neck of a tall sorrel. "Know any others, Weary?"

"Here's old Snag Shirey's glass-eyed roan," grunted Weary.

"C'mon," whispered Dusty, and led the way to the opening where the men had disappeared. Once inside he cautioned

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Weary about the short ladder, as it would be a fine place to take a nasty fall.

This ladder was located in such a way that Dusty and Weary were able to reach the level of the cave floor without exposing themselves to the men inside, but it required that they climb down the side of the ladder, protecting themselves with the projecting ledge.

Once at the bottom they squeezed in close to the wall and listened to the conversation of the inhabitants, who were not over twenty feet away. The fire had been rebuilt and some one was rattling tin-ware. Out of the jumble of conversation came Bonn's voice angrily—

"Well, whose fault was it that things got balled up?"

"I told yuh what happened to me—" this from Wharton—"I took a shot at 'em back in the big cave, and I didn't think they'd be fools enough to keep on comin'."

"You've told us that a hundred times," sneered Bonn. "What do yuh reckon we ought to do—kiss yuh?"

"Wait a minute," this from a strange voice. "There's no use blaming anybody, Bonn. What happened has happened, and if we've got any sense left, we'll use it up in futures, not in pasts."

"Futures!" sneered Bonn. "We've got somethin' to look forward to, ain't we? Things were going all right until you thought you had to come over and hurry things along, Rand."

Rand! Dusty frowned over this name. That was a new one on him. Who was Rand? Dusty did not dare to look around the corner of the rock, because the firelight had already painted it with an orange and red glow. It would be like putting his face into a spot-light.

"I'm the one that was paying for it," said Rand. "It was my money, Bonn; remember that."

"And my scheme!" reminded Bonn.

"You can have that credit," laughed Rand, and another voice joined in the laugh.

"Your big mistake was that you didn't kill that sheriff, Bonn," again it was a new voice entering the conversation.

There was a space of a few seconds, and Wharton's voice whined:

"Yuh don't need to look at me thataway, Bonn. I didn't have nothin' but knock-out drops to give him, but I gave him enough to kill a horse."

Dusty grinned widely at this and nudged Weary in the ribs. Dusty was thoroughly enjoying himself now, and cared little what happened in the future.

"I think it was a crazy-man's idea all the time," declared Snag Shirey's voice. Snag was evidently preparing the meal, as his voice came from over by the fire.

"What do you mean?" queried the heavy voice of Rand.

"That just because yuh cleaned up on sheep in Wyoming ain't no reason yuh could do it here. You hired us to steal cows and put the fear of God into the Big Bear cow-men, but it ain't worked out like you said."

"Is that so? Just what did I say?"

"You said that inside of a year every ranch in Big Bear could be bought for a third what it's worth, didn't yuh? You wanted to buy the whole upper end of it for a sheep ranch, but I don't see yuh doin' it."

It was plain to Dusty now. The little note book had the code for wires between Bonn and Rand. Their scheme was practically to force the sale of Big Bear ranchers, and to turn the wide range into sheep. And the scheme was also bringing them a big revenue in stolen cattle. The depot agent was also a tool of Rand.

"What kick have you got comin', Shirey?" queried Bonn. "You're gettin' yore share of the money, ain't yuh?"

"Yeah, I s'pose so, but the game is up now. Corbett knows where the cows went to and he likely knows who brought 'em here. This business was all right, as long as nobody knowed how it was done. There's only one thing left t' do, and that is for all of us to fade out of this country and go a —— long ways from here."

Shirey's feet scraped back to the fire and he began rattling his pans again. To Dusty's nostrils came the savory odors of boiling coffee. He knew now what the main purpose of the Sticky Ropes was. He took a chance and peered around the corner of the ledge.

The elder Ramsey was standing beside Bonn in the center of the room. Shirey was humped over to fire, busy peeling potatoes, while the younger Ramsey was sitting on a boulder, watching Shirey and smoking a cigaret. Wharton leaned against the wall facing Bonn and Ramsey, while further back, near the exit to the lake, sat

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Stella, paying no attention to the others in the cave. As Dusty looked at her she got up and went slowly out of the cave. Bonn turned his head and looked in her direction for a moment and then laughed as he turned to Ramsey.

"Ramsey is Rand," mused Dusty. "Rand was in sheep in Wyoming, and cleaned up on them."

Young Ramsey, or Rand, turned and sauntered out of the lake exit, and Dusty's lips shut in a tight line. It was easy enough to grin at the thoughts of any one else having Stella, but it was different to see her accepted sweetheart walking out to meet her. Bonn was talking again and Dusty stopped his painful musings to listen closely.

"Corbett is sure one plain —— fool," declared Bonn.

"Luckily for us," agreed Ramsey warmly, "you don't reckon he'll come back, do you?"

"Not him," laughed Bonn. "He's stuck on Stella and he won't do anythin' to hurt her feelin's. Naw, yuh can count him out of the deal entirely."

Shirey straightened up from the fire.

"How much did Corbett know about us—before today, Bonn?"

"Not a —— thing, Snag."

"Then why did he blat at yuh down in Calumet?"

"I dunno," Bonn shook his head. "Jist happened to, I reckon."

"Thasso?" Shirey was unconvinced. "He didn't have no cause t' do it, and he winked one eye at me when he done it."

"You gittin' scared too?" queried Bonn sarcastically.

"Yo're —— right. Any old time yuh think I ain't—think ag'in! Every one of us has inherited a rope, yuh must remember, and if we ain't careful we're goin' t' collect. Weary Willis was with Corbett, and knows about it too, don't he? Dusty might keep his mouth shut on account of the girl, but yuh gotta remember that Weary Willis ain't in love with her."

"There's a lotta sense in that argument," agreed Wharton. "We're up against a cold-deck from now on. We've either got to take care of Corbett, Weary and the girl or fade pronto."

Dusty leaned in closer. What did Wharton mean about "taking care of the girl?" He knew that it meant an attempt to kill him and Weary, but why kill Stella?

"Do you think I'm going to quit now?" demanded Ramsey heatedly. "I've spent a lot of money getting as far as I have. Shirey's ranch cost me fifteen thousand dollars, alone.

"It's a —— shame that things broke the way they did, but I ain't going to quit. No —— love-sick sheriff and a pink-faced female are going to break up my deal—not that anybody knows about!"

"Mebbe he's love-sick, I dunno," Shirey shook his head. "Palo Huston missed him and got his. Palo was m' bunkie."

"He bungled the job," declared Ramsey. "Got drunk and shot high. I ain't got no job for a bungler."

Shirey nodded slowly.

"I reckon so, Ramsey. Kinda funny about Palo bein' killed with a thirty-eight gun. Corbett don't shoot no thirty-eight."

"Not if yuh believe Corbett," said Bonn meaningly.

"I do—kinda. Yuh see, he ain't never lied to me, Bonn."

"What's the use of arguing about it?"

Ramsey was a trifle angry, and in spite of his boastings was not a little worried over the outcome.

"Not a bit of use," agreed Bonn. "Shirey would rather argue than drink good liquor, and I was accomodatin' him. Now, we might as well plan out what we're goin' to do, eh?"

Ramsey nodded and looked toward the lake-exit.

"The girl won't be hard to dispose of, but it's got to be done pretty quick. Then we've got to make a quick job of the sheriff and deputy. It's not only got to be a —— quick job, but it's got to be a sure job.

"Nobody, except those three, know that we're into this. By tomorrow morning these hills will be filled with men, hunting for that girl; and if we don't settle the hash of Corbett and Willis they'll be leading the posse into here."

Stella and the younger Ramsey were coming back into the cave, and Bonn turned to Stella.

"Did Dusty Corbett swear to you that he was going to forget what he knew about us and this place?"

Stella thought for a moment and shook her head.

"No, I—I don't think he did."

"He didn't?" Ramsey seemed surprized. "What did he say?"

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"He said—" Stella paused and reflected back to her conversation with Dusty—"he said, 'I reckon I'm a —— of a sheriff.' "

For a moment there was silence, and then Snag Shirey laughed harshly.

"What the —— are yuh laughin' about?" snapped Bonn nervously.

"Laughin' about that promise," replied Snag. "Yuh thought that Corbett was a fool, didn't yuh?"

Bonn snarled and turned to Stella.

"Does Corbett know who is in this gang?"

Stella pointed at Wharton.

"He was here. I didn't tell him any more names, but I think he knows."

"Yuh think he does, eh?" Bonn sneered openly at her now. "He loved you so much that he was willin' to keep his mouth shut, did he? He did, like ——! I wish your horse had fell and killed you, instead of dumping you among us yesterday. It would have saved us all a —— lot of trouble."

"Why what do you mean?" gasped Stella stepping back from him.

"I mean that you was worth a lot more dead than alive to us, but nobody thought of it at that time."

Bonn turned angrily to Snag.

"I reckon it was you that proposed bringin' her here, wasn't it? Yeah? And it also was you that declared Dusty Corbett too dead to skin, wasn't it? You sure tied a rope around our necks."

"Hold your temper!" snapped the elder Ramsey, or Rand. "No use cursing Shirey for making a mistake like that. I thought Corbett was dead, and so did you."

"But what does it mean?" asked Stella, and Dusty could see that her face was dead white in the pale light. "You told me——"

Bonn interrupted her with a nasty laugh:

"You little fool! Go over there by the wall and set down!"

"Mr. Rand, won't you tell me what it means?" Stella appealed to the elder Rand, who merely grunted and turned away and spoke directly to Shirey.

"Do you know any short-cuts out of here to Calumet?"

"No," said Shirey shortly.

"You and Wharton have got to go to Calumet and 'get' Corbett and Willis tonight. Make a clean job of it and I'll give you a thousand dollars apiece. If you knew a short-cut, it might save you from meeting any one on the way."

Shirey laughed and shook his head.

"Not me, Rand. When I go out of here I'm pointin' the other way; *sabe?* I've rustled cows for yuh and all that, but I ain't killed nobody—yet."

Rand was watching Shirey closely, and now he moved in closer, menacingly.

"You dirty coward!" he gritted. "You can't quit on me. I don't stand for a quitter nor a bungler. Palo Huston bungled."

"You didn't kill him, Rand." Snag was grinning like a coyote now as he slouched, half against the rocky wall.

"No, I didn't kill him!" snapped Rand, "But, by ——, I had him killed. Bonn bungled once, but he made good the second time."

Shirey looked at Bonn curiously.

"You killed him, eh? Just because he missed?"

"He missed," said Rand coldly. "He had orders to keep sober, I won't have a drunk nor a fool. If Bonn hadn't dumped him over the trail he would have talked in his delirium and put a rope around our necks."

"It didn't do no good," said Shirey wearily. "We've got the rope comin' just the same."

"Not if you and Wharton bump off those two officers," declared Rand.

"What about the girl?" this from the younger Ramsey, who broke into the conversation for the first time.

The elder Rand looked at Stella, who had sat down on a rock near the lake-exit. She did not look up at him, and he turned to his son.

"There's only one thing to do with her—unless you want to get hung—and the rest of us."

Young Rand laughed nervously.

"I don't think I do, old man."

"Better let her alone until we're sure of Corbett and Willis," suggested Wharton. "We can keep her hid, but they're dangerous as long as they're alive."

"Keep nobody hid!" growled Bonn. "They can't hang us any higher, can they? We've got to clean up the whole bunch and be down at Shirey's place when the whole —— Bear range comes huntin' for her. Magruder knew that we went back there.

"He knows that it was the Sticky Ropes that pulled off the job, and he don't know

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who they are. It was lucky for us that Shorty Miles found us there at Shirey's ranch, 'cause it proves a good alibi for us. If they didn't find us there now, it would prove that we was huntin' for the girl, but I'd rather be found there. Now, do we save our necks, or stretch 'em?"

"Shirey and Wharton will go to Calumet," declared Rand, "and the rest of us will finish the job here."

"I reckon that Wharton and me will go to Calumet," stated Bonn. "I want this to be a sure job and I don't trust Shirey."

Shirey laughed harshly. It was more of a cackle than a laugh; a mirthless flutter of his vocal cords.

"Yuh didn' trust m' bunkie," shrilled Shirey. "You killed him 'cause yuh didn't trust him, Bonn. Yuh didn't give him a chance. Yuh don't trust me, and it's an even break. Shoot, you coyote!"

Shirey fairly shrieked the last word, as his arm flashed down and up from his holster. But young Rand had drawn his gun, as Shirey had flung his challenge, and he fired as Shirey drew. Bonn's gun whipped from its holster and covered Shirey, as he fell, but there was no need for a second shot.

The pistol shot thundered hollowly in the cave and seemed to echo far out through the rocky crevices.

"Good work!" Bonn's voice sounded weak, as he clapped a hand on Rand's shoulder. "He was mighty fast on the draw."

"Now, we'll have to explain what became of Shirey," complained Wharton. "This is one —— of a mess."

DUSTY drew back and motioned Weary up the ladder. It was a precarious piece of climbing, but the others inside the cave were too interested for a moment to hear what slight noise they made. Once outside, Dusty led the way back to the horses and collected the lariat ropes. Weary did not ask any questions, but followed Dusty to the edge of the slide above the lake, where they knotted the ropes together.

"—— only knows whether it'll reach or not," grunted Dusty, "but I've gotta take a chance. Stay here, Weary."

Dusty knotted the rope to a snag and backed down the slide cautiously, so as not to dislodge any of the shale rock. It was a slow difficult job, and Dusty realized the need of haste.

Once at the edge of the break he swung over and slid down to the water. The rope barely brushed the surface of the lake. There was no visible glow from the lighted cavern, and he was forced to grope his way along until he could locate the entrance. The water was very cold.

Inside he crawled until he came to the almost square turn which masked the entrance. He peered around this and found himself almost in reach of Stella, who was sitting with her back to him. To apprize her of his presence might startle her and warn the others. Bonn was talking and looking toward her.

"It'll take all night," stated Bonn, "but we'll do the job up right, Rand. If anybody shows up there early, you tell 'em that me and Shirey went out to watch a deer-lick. We'll make a mystery out of Shirey's disappearance. If we ain't back by noon—we won't be back; so you fellers better git goin'."

Dusty knew that Bonn and Wharton would miss their ropes and also discover Weary; so he took a chance and hissed softly at Stella. The first time she started to turn her head, but turned back to look at the elder Rand, who had started toward her. Again Dusty hissed and whispered quickly:

"This is Dusty, Stell. Sneak out easy!"

Rand was coming toward her, and she got to her feet, as though in fear of him, and began backing out of the cavern. Rand laughed and stopped.

"You won't go far, I guess," he remarked as he stopped and spoke to Bonn, who was starting for the ladder.

Stella backed around the angle and Dusty grasped her by the arm, hurrying her along.

"Don't talk!" he gritted into her ear. "And don't be afraid of the water; it ain't deep."

She caught her breath, as he hurried her off the ledge and into the icy water, but she did not break her silence. As swiftly as possible, Dusty led her along the border of the lake, feeling for the rope-end. He had not realized the difficulty of finding it again.

Came the scrape of boots on rocks, a moment's silence and then a withering curse from the lips of the elder Rand. He had reached the edge of the lake and had

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not found Stella. He turned and went stumbling back into the cavern, cursing wickedly.

Dusty swung his arm in a circle in the dark and his wrist struck the dangling rope.

"Stell, I've gotta leave yuh a little while," whispered Dusty. "Yuh can't climb this alone, and it ain't long enough to tie around yuh; but mebbe I can give yuh enough slack to do the job. If I can't, yuh gotta hang on with yore hands, when I git up there. I'll give a little yank, and when yore all ready, you yank twice; *sabe?*"

"All right, Dusty," she whispered. "Go ahead!"

Dusty grasped the rope, but before he could pull himself out of the water the beams of a lantern flooded the entrance to the cavern, and the four men came out.

"You're crazy!" growled Bonn, "She never went into the lake of her own accord."

He lifted the lantern above his head and peered out across the water. A second later Dusty fired, and the lantern chimney showered glass against the rocks. With a startled curse, Bonn dropped the wrecked lantern and fell back into a safe place.

Other voices swore wonderingly and one of the men tried to scratch a match.

"Don't do that, you —— fool!" roared Bonn. "Want to make a target of yourself?"

"Did that girl get a gun?" queried Wharton shakily. "Which way did the shot come from, Bonn?"

"How do I know?" snarled Bonn. "It came from the lake, that's all I know."

"Well, she can't get away, can she?" asked young Rand. "There ain't no way out except this way, is there?"

"No, there ain't," declared Bonn, "but it would be a cinch for any one to see her from the other side of the lake. Mebbe she couldn't stand it to be in that water all night, but we'd be takin' a chance."

"Well, what'll we do?" demanded young Rand. "Shall we roost there all night?"

"No, that won't do," objected Bonn, "We've got to do that job in Calumet tonight. The girl can't get out of the lake."

They turned and went back inside—at least some of them did, but Dusty knew that some one of them remained at the ledge to watch.

Cautiously he lifted himself from the water and began climbing the rope, while his dripping clothes poured a shower of water back into the lake. There was no use in being cautious now. If any one remained on guard at the entrance they would know that their quarry was escaping in some way. He heard the scrape of boots. as the watcher turned and hurried inside.

Dusty dropped back into the lake, steadied himself with the rope and grasped Stella by the arm.

"Back into the cave," he whispered. "They think I've gone over the top."

They struggled back to the ledge and in through the crevice. A straight view through the cavern showed it to be empty, and they half-ran into it, thinking that every one had gone out. A noise behind them caused Dusty to whirl around and look straight into the muzzle of Bonn's pistol.

"Foxy, eh?" gritted Bonn triumphantly. "I figured it was somethin' like this. I knowed the girl didn't have no gun, and you was my big bet."

Bonn laughed wickedly. From outside came the whang of a shot, and his eyes flashed to the ladder exit for a fraction of a second.

"Mebbe that's the end of yore deputy," he grinned. "It's three to one out there, Corbett. You sure saved us a trip to town."

"You didn't think we came back—just two of us, did yuh?" quered Dusty.

Bonn's eye lids quivered a trifle, but the rest of his face did not change expression. He did not know whether Dusty was bluffing or not.

"Don't try to bluff me, Corbett. You and Weary never left here today—and you never will leave here."

Dusty's eyes shifted to the body of Snag Shirey, which was acting queerly for a dead person. Shirey was trying to get up on his hands and knees. He was almost directly behind Bonn, who noticed the intent expression on Dusty's face. But Bonn was not to be fooled by any such trick. He knew that he ought to shoot Dusty, but he wanted to talk a while—boast a little more.

"None of that kinda stuff, Corbett," he warned.

Dusty did not lift his eyes, as he said:

"By golly, that's funny. Yuh ought t' look, Bonn."

Snag was getting to his feet now, his face distorted with pain and his eyes fixed on Bonn's back.

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"Funny, eh?" snarled Bonn. "I'm too old in this game to be fooled by a trick like that, Corbett; so don't be —— fool enough to think it. Listen to me."

Stella was watching Bonn, her face white. She was afraid that Bonn might turn, and she knew that Dusty was overdoing his part of it to be sure that Bonn would not look. Shirey had found his gun now, but his arm muscles were uncertain, which made it dangerous for both Dusty and Stella. He weaved on his legs, looking around dazedly, as though not exactly sure of himself. Bonn's face was distorted with wrath and his knuckles were white in the firelight, as he gripped the heavy Colt pistol.

"—— you!" snapped Bonn. "You fool, do yuh think——"

Came a harsh cackle from Shirey's lips. He had heard Bonn's voice and the mists had been swept away from his numbed mind. Bonn jerked forward, as though from an electric shock, but he did not dare to turn. He was as a man paralyzed. Death was behind him—and to turn was to give Dusty a chance for a quick draw. And he knew that Dusty was swift.

"He, he, he, he!" cackled Shirey. "Palo was m' bunkie, Bonn. Do yuh want to take it in the back or the front?"

From the outside came the thud of another shot.

"Back or the front?" cackled Shirey, "He, he, he! Yo're a dead man, Bonn. "You've killed a-plenty—now take yours."

Bonn whirled, stumbled against the uneven floor, while Shirey's six-shooter spouted flame in the dim light. Dusty flung Stella aside and dove into Shirey, flinging him back against the wall, where he collapsed.

Came the thud of another shot, and two men seemed to fairly hurtle in sight down the ladder, crashing together at the bottom, fighting, striking. It was young Rand and Wharton. Dusty caught a whirling glimpse of them, as he sprang away from Shirey, and then came the third body, dropping feet first into them.

"Yee-o-o-ow!" came Weary's yell. "Hookum cow!"

Weary was trying to do a war-dance on Wharton and young Rand and trying to bounce his pistol barrel off their heads at the same time. Dusty ran over to him and grasped Rand by the legs, yanking him out of the mix-up, while Weary confined his attentions to putting Wharton *hors de combat.*

Dusty dragged Rand over near the fire. Rand's gun had been lost in the scuffle and he looked dazedly up at Dusty, as if not understanding what had happened.

"I kinda hoodled 'em, didn't I?" crowed Weary, dragging the unconscious Wharton over to the fire.

"One of 'em musta seen me out there and snuck up on me."

Weary glanced around over the victims and rubbed his chin.

"I reckon it was papa, after e-liminatin' the rest. Anyway, he tackled me out there on that slidin' stuff, and I kicked his feet out from under him and took a wing-shot at him as he went over the edge.

"These other two got kinda numerous and I drove 'em back into the hole. Why didn't yuh come on up the rope? I felt yuh yank hard on it and in a minute yuh let loose of it."

Rand sat up dazedly and looked around. Realization was coming back to him, and it was not pleasant. Dusty looked at Stella and pointed at Rand.

"Was he the one yuh meant, Stell?"

Stella stared at Dusty, as if not understanding.

"Yuh said yuh loved one of the Sticky Ropes, Stell," reminded Dusty.

"—I don't know," faltered Stella wearily. "They said they were going to kill me. He—" pointing at Rand—"was one of them, Dusty."

"You don't love him, do yuh?" queried Weary.

"No! Love that man?"

"Well, yuh never can tell about a woman," said Weary.

Shirey lifted himself to a half-sitting position and looked around. He was very weak, and his hands groped around, as though searching for something.

"Whatcha want, Snag?" asked Dusty.

Snag looked up vacantly at him.

"M' gun," he whispered, "I've gotta shoot Bonn. Palo was m' bunkie."

"You got him, Snag," said Dusty. "You got Bonn."

Snag mouthed a jumble of words—

"Dreamin'—I—shot—Bonn— where's—gun?"

"You got him," repeated Dusty.

"Yeah?" Shirey grinned vacantly. "Did I? Good!"

Shirey's eyes lifted and focused on Stella.

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The vacant look had vanished now and he seemed to recognize them.

"H'lo, li'l girl! Sheriff! End of the Sticky Ropes, eh? We're all here, gentlemen. Li'l girl, we lied to you. Your pa ain't one of us. We lied to git yuh to come here peaceable!"

Then Dusty knew that Stella had not been protecting a sweetheart, but her father; and a warm glow came over him, in spite of his dripping, clammy clothes.

"Yo're wise in comin' clean about it, Snag," he stated.

Snag looked up at Dusty.

"Ol' Snag ain't goin' t' hang, sheriff. Got m' ticket to a hotter place than Big Bear. Ain't goin' t' be no cold Winter fr ol' Snag. Bonn was the killer, and he's gone. Ol' Rand paid the freight. Do the best yuh can with the rest. We thought yuh was a fool, sheriff; but you're alive and we—ain't. S'—long."

The practical Weary picked up a coil of rope and proceeded to hog-tie the captives, but Dusty had seemed to have lost interest in the Sticky Ropes. He was looking at Stella, and for once in his life he was not making faces at her.

"I—I wasn't no hero, Stell," he said softly. "I thought yuh loved young Rand, but I didn't go away and give yuh up."

Stella looked into the light of the fire for a moment and back into Dusty's serious face, as she took him by both hands.

"No, you wasn't a hero, Dusty. You're just a —— of a sheriff—and that's hero enough for me!"

"Aw-w-w-w!" growled Weary disgustedly, but nobody heard him, except Wharton and Rand, and they were not interested.

Groan o' the Gallows

Pirate Tales from the Law-Green

by

Arthur M. Harris

Author of "Sea Horror," "Back Pay," etc.

FROM the thickly forested heights of Cape Masoala one can, without being one's self observed, sweep, with an easy turning of the head, the broad Indian Ocean that pounds perpetually upon the rocky beach at the base of the cape; the blue placidity of Antongil Bay up to its farthest reaches; the huddle of huts which make the town of Mananara, on the opposite shore, and the tiny island of St. Mary's snuggling close to the other portal of the bay.

That is to suppose that you wish to see and not be seen—a rather uncommon circumstance in the lives of plain, honest men; but certainly a great advantage to those who conceive that their particular and peculiar interests require secrecy. Cape Masoala has known both sort of folk. The peering botanist has explored it for his specimens; the French surveyor has mapped every inch of it, and the olive-hued Malagasy native has for centuries gone about the cape on his innocent occasions, all quite careless as to who did or did not observe them.

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Certain other gentry, however, have from time to time made a use of the ancient cape not entirely commendable. Sad to relate, such persons not infrequently came ashore from ships wickedly sailing beneath the black bunting of piracy. These climbed the steep, wooded slopes not for the purpose of feasting their souls on the beautiful, but for the pernicious design of observing those worthy people who passed in and out of Antongil Bay upon the lawful errands of commerce.

In March, 1702, to take a notable instance of this reprehensible use of the cape, not many less than fifty men lay sprawled in the tropic undergrowth of the headland watching with quick eyes the tardy evolutions of two square-rigged, stumpily built ships working their way alongside the rickety wharf of Mananara.

At length the two ships were berthed, and up their riggings men, looking like small boys at that distance, climbed and began to take in the canvas. One of the watchers in the wood yawned, stretched his lean arms high over his head and said as he rattled the thick gold rings in his ears—

"We'll soon be to sea again, cap'n."

The man called captain nodded. A great bullock of a fellow he stood, hands on hips, gazing frowningly down at the bay, apparently constructing the strategy of an impending move. He had a flattish, three-cornered hat, somewhat too small for his head, pushed forward over his eyes; the breeches, stockings and buckled shoes of the period had evidently had long and hard wear in contrast with the brilliant sash about his waist from which protruded the handle of a dirk. One great, sinewy hand dangled a belt to which was fastened a thick cutlas.

If he were captain then all these fellows strewn about the grass must be his subordinates. Honest men they no doubt accounted themselves, but their looks belied them; no ordinary man would have cared to picnic with that group in their present beautiful retreat. Their complexions were as colorful as the sashes which almost all of them affected—here was the blond Scandinavian, with his blue, wistful, deep-sea eyes and tawny hair and beard; beside him would be a swart continental—French predominantly—chattering constantly and continually winding his beard in ringlets about his forefinger; and not a few men of the blackest ebon, the hue of the West Indian negro, not the lighter tint of the native Sakalava. Whatever his color, every man there was capable of committing any violence—that was his qualification for companionship.

A hard group—and how hard must the leader of it be! Well, John Bowen, the brawny chieftain, was a hard man.

Although maritime history has failed to spell his name with capital letters, John Bowen was one of the most willing little workers in the red trade of sea-robbery. Where he came from and what his finish was we do not certainly know, but while his keel danced its brief hour upon the waters of the Indian Ocean John Bowen displayed those qualities of resolution, ruthlessness and rapidity which ordinarily earned one a rapid promotion in piracy, and not infrequently a sequential elevation, before an admiring and applauding populace, at the end of the king's rope.

While, as we say, his origins are obscure, there is little doubt that John Bowen came to this Cape Masoala, in the island of Madagascar, directly or indirectly from the West Indies, which for generations was the *alma mater* of all the best pirates. A great school of maritime crime was this West Indian group, having at one time or another on its faculty such eminent masters as Blackbeard, lecturer on Violent Deaths at Sea, and whose subsidiary course on Ship Scuttling was deservedly popular. Then, too, many earnest young students from all over the world were drawn thither by Morgan's notable presentation of the subject of the Assault, Capture and Loot of Municipalities.

In fact, the whole scheme of instruction was very thorough. Two prominent practitioners of the art of piracy, Captains Kidd and Avery, so esteemed the advantages there offered that both, after distinguishing themselves in the actual practise, resorted there for post-graduate work.

There was a finish, a fineness about John Bowen's work which clearly indicated the superiority of his academic training and stamped him as one of the most promising graduates. Everybody in the Caribbean anticipated a great future for him, and, so far as we can follow his career, these friendly prophecies were amply fulfilled.

Evidently when he faced the world with his sheepskin in his hand and the blush of

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collegiate honors still on his brow, John Bowen had determined to set up business for himself in the East Indies, a fact which indicated the clarity of his judgment and real appreciation of opportunity, for in the East Indies of his day it was so easy for a competent pirate to get rich as to make one feel that one's abilities had never been properly tested. But, of course, there were accidents and unavoidable miscalculations, and John must be supposed to have run into one of those inescapable set-backs to which even pure genius is liable, from the fact that he is perched upon a headland of Madagascar with a crew but without a ship.

Of course, time and opportunity would correct that state of affairs, for the matter of appropriating a ship was just elementary freshman work in the university of piracy from which he had graduated, *summa cum laude*. And now, as John gazed down on these two ships below him, he realized with satisfaction that time and opportunity were in happy concurrence.

He selected four Englishmen—two, as it chanced, were from New York—and, directing the rest to meet him at dark in the woods behind Mananara, descended to the beach, where a broken-down native boat was staked. The party crossed the bay, and Bowen himself went down to the waterfront to look at the newly arrived ships.

It was now toward evening, and from the cook-house rose a thin blue spear of smoke on each ship where the supper was being prepared. Sailors were hanging over the bulwarks, smoking long pipes and laughing and joking in the burring tongue of Scotland. They noticed the hulking white stranger loafing about the wharf, but made no comment, for one does not long knock about the waters of Madagascar without dulling the faculty of surprize.

Bowen marked the names of the two vessels—*Content* and *Speedy Return*. This latter name he thought unfortunate in view of all the circumstances. *Speedy Return*? Not if Jack Bowen knew anything about the matter.

TO GET the full value out of this adventure, we have to know a little something about these two doomed ships and why and how they happened to be in this little port of Mananara at this particular time. If we lift the fly-blown, time-stained pages of history we get a queerish kind of a yarn in this connection. It only needs a momentary glance, and when we have taken it we shall the more appreciate the significance of the sinister meddling of Jack Bowen—who, of course, knew nothing of what we shall know and, just as much of course, if he had known he would not have cared two straws; in fact, would have enjoyed his game all the more.

In June, 1695, some half a dozen years before Jack Bowen comes on the stage, a group of Scotch noblemen, with some other folk of lesser influence, procured a statute from the English Parliament and a charter from the English Crown, authorizing them to incorporate an African-Indian trading-company. Their chief object was to found a Scotch colony in the Isthmus of Panama, or Darien as it was then called. Everybody was going to get immensely rich out of the venture.

But the noblemen were not stingy about it—they decided to offer the stock of their corporation to the public. They evidently had a wonderful advertising manager, for an old writer tells us that when the stock was put on the market the "nobility, the gentry, the merchants, the people, the royal burghs without the exception of one, and most of the other public bodies subscribed. Young women threw their little fortunes into the stock; widows sold their jointures to get command of money for the same purpose. Almost in an instant four hundred thousand pounds were subscribed in Scotland, although it be now known that there was not at that time above eight hundred thousand pounds of cash in the kingdom."

That is what you may call promoting—to get half the cash of the kingdom. It was the last chance anybody ever had of that sort in Scotland.

Everything went so well that the English East India Company became exceedingly jealous and not a little fearful that a powerful rival was rising in the north to challenge its hold in the Far East. In politics, in the financial world, in every way it possibly could, the English company sought to thwart the Scotchmen and upon the whole succeeded very satisfactorily in handicapping the latter.

Being Scotchmen, however, they went right ahead, "satisfied of the envy of the English and of their consciousness of the advantages which were to flow to Scotland"

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from the Darien colony. Six ships were built, each able to carry two hundred emigrants, and "on the 26th of July, 1698, the whole city of Edinburgh streamed down upon Leith to see the Darien voyagers depart, amidst the tears and praises and prayers of relations and friends, and of their countrymen. Many seamen and soldiers, whose services had been refused, because more offered themselves than were needed, were found hid in the ships, and when ordered ashore, clung to the ropes and timbers, imploring to go without reward."

The colony, however, was a dismal and tragic failure. When the people arrived at Darien, the Dutch East India Company —instigated it was believed by agents of the English company—forbade the factors of their forts in that region to give help of any sort to the Scotchmen. Expecting to get supplies locally and being thus refused "the colonists fell into diseases from bad food and want of food" and almost all of them faded and died.

Eight months of horror lagged along, and then the colony broke up, only a handful surviving to stagger to the ship for home. In the meanwhile, however, another crowd of thirteen hundred colonists had left Scotland for Darien amid the same hurrah, only to meet the same fate as had the first, and to send back as survivors only a pitiful remnant of thirty.

Scotland laid all the blame upon England in general and the East India Company in particular, and deeply smoldered the already traditional hatred between the northern and southern peoples.

Withal the Scotch African-Indian trading company kept intact, but took on the character of a more private commercial corporation. It entered in the orthodox fashion on the East India trade wherever it could circumvent the English monopoly, and to this end sent forth its young but not unpromising fleet to Indian waters; and of this fleet the *Content* and the *Speedy Return* were fair representatives.

But see what an unhappy destiny pursues this Scotch company! Here it is, trying to recuperate from the terrible disaster of Darien, just, as they say of an invalid, getting about again, when wretched, wicked and utterly reprehensible Jack Bowen is on the job, in far-off Madagascar, lurking about in the woods ready to inflict upon the poor company another terrible adversity!

On the 26th of May, 1701, the *Speedy Return* and the *Content* had sailed from Glasgow for the East Indies. What great things they were to accomplish! How they were to return soon—speedily, as the name would seem to hope—laden with gold and gain!

The name of John Bowen did not mean a thing in Glasgow. Such is life. They lumbered, after the fashion of the blunt ships of that age, first to Guinea, then to the Cape of Good Hope—propitious name—and there, as well as at Guinea, they discovered that there was not a little profit to be had by postponing their arrival at Malabar and the Indian trade proper and diverting themselves to the slave business. In this traffic then they came over from the mainland of Africa to the island of St. Mary's, in Madagascar, where they loaded their holds with the negroid Sakalavas sold to them by the Hovas and other superior tribes of the island.

So cargoed, they went on from St. Mary's, Madagascar, to Mauritius, where they discharged their load of slaves and in March, 1702, were back again in Madagascar, at a place they called Maritan, but which has probably become Mananara, ready for another batch of blacks, and—though naturally this was beyond their expectation—the thunderbolt of as desperate a gang of pirates as ever cast dice with the hangman.

GRADUALLY Bowen's shipless crew gathered in the woods back of the town and impatiently waited for morning. When the tropic sun at length surged up abruptly from beneath the far, thin, eastern line of the Indian Ocean, they girded their belts about them, looked to their weapons, hefting their cutlases and attending to the priming of their pistols, and waited the cheerful word of onslaught.

Bowen called together the four English-speaking men he had first selected the day before on the chance of being able to make immediate use of them, and left with them for the very outskirts of the town, where they settled themselves in the lush vegetation and watched their prey. Before separating from the main group Bowen, like a true general, addressed his troops.

"If it comes to trouble," he said succinctly, "and ye find ye against a man bigger

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than ye, take your tools quickly—" here he tapped his cutlas—"and cut him down to your size."

The plan was for the four men and Bowen to board the ship *Speedy Return* by stratagem when if the chance was good Bowen would sound the bosun's whistle which he carried for that purpose and the reserves were to come up in full force.

Early after breakfast the lurkers noticed what was evidently the captain of the *Speedy Return*, accompanied by a group of men, come ashore and set off through the woods to the neighboring villages, evidently in the transaction of their traffic in human beings. The day burned to high noon and high noon waned toward evening, and still the cautious Bowen, not risking a fizzle in this his great and long-sought opportunity, held his hounds in the leash. Quite late in the afternoon, when it was reasonably certain the captain had gone for a considerable time, and when the remnant of the crews of the two ships were scattered, some about the town and others dozing on the hot decks, John Bowen and his four aides stepped from the brush and strode past the thatched native huts and out on the dock. They ran up the ladder and were on the deck of the *Speedy Return*.

"Ho, mate," called Bowen, grinning genially at what was evidently the ship's cook, carrying a butcher-knife in one hand and a leg of a sheep in the other, "who's the master of this ship?"

"Cap'n Rab Drummond, frae Edinburgh," burred the cook. "And who be ye, mon?"

"Oh, we're nobody; just come aboard looking to buy a bit of breadstuff and tobacco, if y've such to spare."

There were not more than a dozen men aboard according to Bowen's swift calculation. Over on the *Content*, a few yards away, there appeared still fewer.

The hour had struck. Bowen drew a pistol from the arsenal of his sash and thrust it against the full girth of the cook.

"Go on to your cookhouse, my lad," he commanded. "You're going to have a few friends for supper."

Thus the chef received notice of the change of management. He took it dully and obediently; anything may happen when one goes so far from Glasgie. Sharp and shrill, the signal whistle beat echoingly from the cliffs of the cape to the heights above the town, and with a terrifying shout the rest of Bowen's men hurled themselves over the bulwarks of both the *Speedy Return* and the *Contest*.

The gang that boarded the latter had a definitely prescribed job to do, and expeditiously they did it. First of all they ran the gaping sailors off her decks and on to those of the *Speedy Return;* then, hastening back, they smeared the decks of the *Content* with pitch, set a train to the small powder-magazine, and as the thick brown-black clouds of smoke rolled sluggishly over the sides they fled, whooping as demons may be supposed to whoop at the mouth of the inferno, for the *Speedy Return*. Her sides they clutched even as she moved away in tow of the ship's boats, out into the bay, where she picked up a helping breeze; where her hastily hoisted sails began to tauten and whence she began quite prettily to glide out into the wide, the welcome ocean.

John Bowen was on a quarterdeck again; it mattered to him little who claimed that same quarterdeck; he was on it, and the quartermaster at the whipstaff swung the helm to this side and that in obedience to his orders. He felt the wind of the free ocean upon his breast and lifted up his great bellowing voice in song. Ha, ha! He, ho! In a jiffy the tables had been turned; John Bowen had had the shore and no ship, and now Captain Robert Drummond, of Edinburgh, out of Glasgow, had all the shore he cared to use and no ship.

No stenographer was present to record what Captain Drummond said when he came out of the woods and found the black embers of the *Content* knocking about the piling or bobbing far out on the bay and of his ship only the stupid, inarticulate remembrance of the gaping Malagasy natives; but without doubt it was something pretty. Captain Stewart was master of the *Content* and probably had been absent with Drummond of the *Speedy Return*, although he might have been on his own ship and been captured with the rest of his crew—nobody has given us the precise information; but if he came out of the woods at the same time that Drummond did there is no doubt the inhabitants beheld two of the angriest Scotchmen they had ever seen or ever were likely to see.

We don't know what happened to

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Stewart; but a man who spent fifteen years in captivity among the Madagascans came home with the story that Drummond found his way to Tullea, on the southwest coast of the island, where, in an altercation with a Jamaican negro, who was of course one of those far-faring West Indian pirates, he received a wallop from the black rogue which deprived the Scotch Africa-India trading-company of a faithful servant and the rising British merchant marine of a competent shipmaster.

Now Bowen between the two appropriated vessels very likely gathered in some thirty men, all well-seasoned sailors. We know the names of only two of these honest tars to whom this vivid change of circumstance occurred—Israel Phippany and Peter Freeland. Some of these captives accepted the fate of the sea and even counted themselves among the pirates; others naturally found the situation not to their liking and stood by for an opportunity to escape.

It was all one to their swaggering captors; whether a man liked it or not, a sailor he was, and sail that ship he should. None of that topmast business for the bold pirate boys; in a jam they might lend a hand at working the vessel, but ordinarily they insisted that fighting was their specialty and avoided the rope and the tar-bucket as quite beneath their dignity. But they were fair in their way, for when it came to a fight they did not call on the shellbacks for help; that too would have been essentially undignified for a master-pirate.

This gang of Bowen stood in a rough relation to the sailors aboard as the marines do to a war vessel. Many ships, of course, were completely manned by confessed pirates and when that was so they had to do sailor work; but whenever they could they were great little chaps for pressing men aboard especially to do the ship's chores. So the *Speedy Return*, being happily in their possession, the pirates lay back under the awnings and drank copiously of arrack, the universal intoxicant of the East Indies, the while their bold chieftain drove his keel along for joyful fights and glorious plunder.

Swinging smartly around the northern nose of Madagascar and shooting westerly, Bowen set the course for the Comoro Islands, some three hundred and fifty miles northwest of Madagascar and two hundred miles east of the coast of Africa. Apparently John was going to lose no time in his business, for the Comoros would be the nearest likely place to pick up a prize; no waiting until he made the distant littoral of India, you notice. His ultimate destination was Rajapore, 'way up in what is now called the Bombay Presidency; but he did not care to go as the crow flies, but rather as the vulture does; pausing for anything that might be carrion.

THE Comoros was a pretty good guess. At Mayotta, one of those islands, they found a ship, commanded by George Weoley, which was loading with sugar, rum, cocoa-oil and taking in fresh beef. The fact that Weoley's vessel was in harbor did not mean anything to John Bowen, if the island itself had been navigable he would have put a crew on it and sailed it away.

The *Speedy Return* shoved alongside its victim; and casually, as men doing an easy job away below their real abilities, a handful of fighters dropped to her decks. Nobody interfered with them but the unimaginative first mate, and his protest was met with a crack on the head which created an immediate promotion for the second mate.

A little more than a year after this misfortune Captain Weoley wrote a plaintive letter to Mr. Pennyng, "Chief of the English East India Company's Factory at Calicut," giving a full and detailed account of the naughtiness of John Bowen, wherein he states that at Mayotta he fell into Bowen's hands and was "detained by him after they had slain my chief mate and plundered what they pleased."

Poor Mr. Weoley and the rest of his people were taken into the forecastle of the *Speedy Return* and thus recruited that ship's list of able seamen. Whether Bowen burned, scuttled or simply abandoned Weoley's craft the good captain does not inform us; but we may be sure that when he headed off for India he left that unfortunate vessel no better for his visit.

During the long and uneventful voyage—uneventful, that is, so far as the piracy game went—Captain Bowen, alas, did not observe those little amenities between brother captains which so pleasantly mitigate the sternness of the sea. Doubtless Mr. Weoley had to do many things aboard which

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drove a bitter iron into his soul. One day he might be lending a hand with the art of navigation if the load of rum captured at Mayotta should happen temporarily to incapacitate Captain Bowen; next day he might pitiably have to fetch and carry water at the behest of the sprawling villains, or again bend his elderly and stiffening back at the eternal task of pumping; and pumping ship in the Indian Ocean must have been—well, hot.

He says himself that he received "many hazards of life and abuses from those villains." Not the least of his grievances was that of listening through the long hours of a torrid night to the liquored Bowen boasting of his wickedness. That remark of Weoley's places Bowen as the true, deliberate, almost romantic pirate and approximates him to the traditional pirate of fiction.

Off the coast of Malabar, Bowen had nearly to sober up, for he was come to his proper fishing-grounds. Up and down this roadstead passed much of the commerce of the East Indies.

Quite a medley it was, to be sure. There were craft from the ten-ton sloop belonging to a petty local merchant, up through increasing tonnage chartered by Moors, Persians, Armenians, Hindus, to the two and three-decker so-called East Indiaman, the ship of the august and imperial East India Company itself. In disturbing this traffic Captain William Kidd had found a fortune in less than six months, and numerous pirates of many nations had here easily enriched themselves.

Captain Bowen, who must have been something of a joker as were so many of his outlaw colleagues, doubtless enjoyed immensely taking a ship with the name of *Prosperous*, which he did shortly after his entry into Indian waters proper. With a chuckle he realized that he had made the owners of the *Content* discontented; he intended that the *Speedy Return* should go home neither slowly nor speedily; and it is very likely that he put the charterers of the *Prosperous* into bankruptcy. It might have been of a better omen in those days to name your ship the very opposite to your hopes; say call the *Content* the *Dissatisfied;* the *Speedy Return* the *Never Come Back* and the *Prosperous, Hard Times*—in which case a marauding pirate would at least lose the dramatic pleasure of surprize.

Having bagged the *Prosperous*, Bowen put a crew on board and used her for an auxiliary, and with this augmented command in a few months, according to Weoley, he took "six sail of ship" and "hundreds of people ruined." The last of these six ships was one from Surat, evidently of considerable size; for Bowen transferred all hands to her and then, being as drunk as a fool, entertained the amazed city of Rajapore with a grand nautical bonfire made up of both the *Prosperous* and the *Speedy Return*. How uneasily the stockholders of the Scotch India-Africa trading-company would have turned in their beds had that lurid light gleamed against their far-off window-panes!

This man Bowen was an incorrigible ship-burner, which proves that he had not the heart of a true sailorman nor the first instincts of a real conqueror of the sea.

On this captured Surat ship, when Bowen got over his pyrotechnic spree, he counted up his men and found, so Weoley records, "seventy Lascars (native of India) and one hundred and forty-six fighting men (the Lascars being used as sailors) of which part are forty-three English, the better part of the company French, the rest negroes (our Jamaica friends) Dutch and other nations that cries, 'Yaw!'"

Quaint foible! Amid all his sufferings poor Captain Weoley could still find a feeling of irritation for men that "cries, 'Yaw'" instead of, "Yes."

Bowen steered from Rajapore down along the Malabar coast until he came to Cochin, a Portuguese settlement where a miscalled Portuguese war fleet made its anchorage. Those old sieves were the local maritime joke, and a brisk pirate would think little of using them for mooring-buoys.

This aggregation had once gone out after the formidable Captain Kidd, and much to its surprize and pain had found him. It had never been known to attempt anything notable since. Certainly it did not trouble John Bowen.

As Bowen dawdled along in these parts, touching at this and that small port for frolic or land robbery or both, "about three leagues to the northward of Cochin" Weoley states, "I got clear of the pirates." Thus ended the worst seven months in the life of that worthy mariner.

What became of Bowen after Weoley escaped from him we do not know, at least

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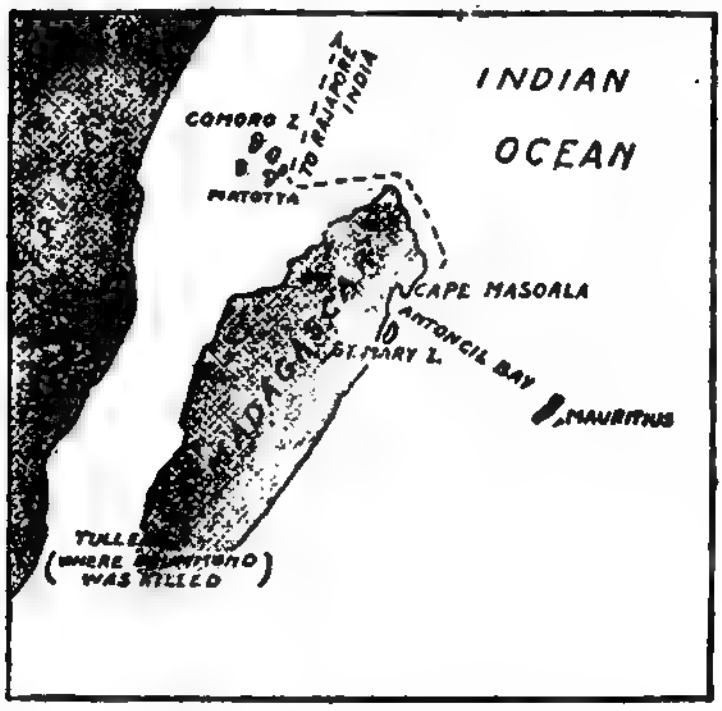
so far as the authentic record we are consulting is concerned. Probably he met the violent end of his like. One thing is sure, however; he was never hanged for the



piracy of the *Speedy Return*, but—and this makes the dread, dark sequel of the crime—another man who knew not Bowen, Robert Drummond or the ill-fated ship *Speedy Return* suffered by one of the most notable miscarriages of justice known to the law as the murderer of Captain Drummond and the pirate of the *Speedy Return*.

II

ON MARCH 8, 1702, a ship called the *Worcester* weighed anchor in the Downs and so began the long voyage from England to India. Perhaps on that very day, certainly within a very few days of that date, the brigantine *Content* was burning to the edge of the waters of a Madagascar bay, and her consort from Scotland, the *Speedy Return*, was romping toward the Comoro Islands beneath the stern and unlawful drive of a sea-brigand.

The purpose of the *Worcester* in the East Indies was to trade, though she did not belong to the East India Company but appears to have been owned by a small group of investors, probably retired sea-captains for the most part. To get a swift idea of what was meant by the East Indian trade one has only to recall the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada, for the methods of both these great trading-corporations were practically the same. Just as the Canadian Company stalked across Canada from fort to fort, so the Indian Company ringed the coast of India with forts, which, like the Canadians, they called "factories" and put in charge of an officer termed a factor.

Both companies held exclusive monopolies in their respective regions by virtue of Government grants; both maintained fleets for the exportation of native products and the importation of English wares and supplies. Each had to meet a certain amount of competition in spite of its exclusive privileges.

The East India Company was far more seriously challenged by rivals than was the Hudson's Bay Company, even in the devastating days of the latter's struggle with the Northwestern Fur Company. Not only England but Holland and numerous other commercial nations of the continent hungered for the loot of India, and between the traders representing all these conflicting greeds an almost continuous state of warfare prevailed, which more than once drew in the Governments themselves.

Not only foreign competitors harassed the English East India Company, for among its annoyances was what was called the "interloper," the English trader who poached in their preserves in defiance of law, to such an extent that not a few considerable fortunes were thus established. But the company did not always pursue these trespassers with the severity which they might lawfully have used; local conditions on the coast made another English ship, even an interloper, not unwelcome, and at such times these gentry were tolerated and even received with a surprizing friendliness.

In addition to the continentals and the interlopers, the Scotch Africa-India company had, as we have seen, following the wreck of the Darien colony, begun to send its ships out for a share of the Indian spoils, two of which ships, through the unwitting kindness of Captain John Bowen, had just been prevented rather forcibly from troubling the sleep of the English company.

The status of the *Worcester* then was that of an interloper, but the time was in one of the more genial humors of the monopolizing company; and Captain Thomas Green, her commander, had reason to believe that it would not seriously molest him as he sought to pick up a couple of hundred tons of more or less profitable cargo.

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An old, slow, lead-sheathed craft was the *Worcester*, formerly in the whaling business. She was about a hundred feet in length and thirty-two or so feet in breadth, and carried a crew of thirty-five men.

Tom Green, her master, was an honest old sea-dog, thoroughly loyal to his owners and to his vessel; the admirable sort of man who does Britannia's drudgery at sea, happy if at last he can step off his quarter-deck with all the limbs he had when he first went up the gangway as a 'prentice, and content to sink into a permanent armchair on the sunny side of a cottage close to tidewater and the lanes of sea-trafficking. And but for John Bowen it is reasonable to suppose that Tom Green would at length have achieved his modest, commendable ambition.

Their objective was Malabar by way of Delagoa Bay. It took her five months to get from the Downs to Delagoa. Here they stayed long enough to build a sloop to be used in river work at Malabar, the materials for which they had brought with them from home.

On November 15, after a voyage of a little more than eight months, she came to Anjango (now Aniengo) at the tip of the Malabar coast, where Captain Green politely put ashore to pay his respects to Mr. Brabourne, chief factor of the English East India Company's fort at that place, and incidentally to make sure that the company was still in the generous notion of living and letting live. One never knew when its policy might suddenly veer like the weathercock on a church steeple.

Happily Mr. Brabourne and his gentlemen were as genial as a June day. Madeira and compliments were enjoyed together; and Green went back to his ship, rejoicing in at least the tacit consent of Mr. Brabourne to his trading-operations. With that load off his mind, he sailed for the Keilon River, a few leagues farther on, and there established contact with Cogi Commodo.

We have mentioned big rival corporations and interlopers; but the coveted Indian trade produced another institution—the petty 'longshore merchant, white or black, generally a follower of the Prophet from some of the far eastern Mohammedan countries. After he had prospered above the peddling stage, this gentleman usually established a little warehouse at the mouth of some one of the sluggish rivers emptying into the Arabian Sea, and there conducted a business which was for the most part illegal.

Briefly he was a purveyor of stolen goods brought to him by the pirates who infested those regions; a "fence" as it is called, and without whom piracy would have been almost impossible, for if a pirate could not dispose of the cargoes he took of perishable or ordinary merchandizable stuff his activity would have been immeasurably curtailed.

For instance, before he made his lucky strike Kidd took tons of butter, cargoes of coffee, opium enough to give his men a thousand years of delightful dreams, far more than could be used aboard his ship and which would have been useless without the obliging fence. This very same Cogi Commodo boasted to the crew of the *Worcester* that he was "merchant" for Kidd. The Cogi was suspected not only of buying from the pirates but of informing them of the movements of promising ships and even of assisting in their actual assault and capture.

Not that Green wanted any such service as this from Commodo; he used him on the more legitimate side of trading, for the Cogi, like the rest of his kind, continually gathered in native products from under the noses of the English forts, for the prime purpose of supplying interlopers. You can see the Cogi was quite an irregular sort of gentleman on whichever side you took him.

The *Worcester* came to the Keilon River on November 21 by way of Callequilon; on December 22 she was back at Callequilon, then made a jump of a hundred or more miles up to Cochin, reaching there January 10, 1703, just about five years to a day after Kidd had made his big capture of the *Quedagh Merchant* in those very waters; and but a few months after the unfortunate Captain Weoley had made his escape at that place from the wicked John Bowen. Green's northward trading seems to have been hurried, for two weeks later he was at Calicut, a month after that back at Cochin, and by March 8 was again anchored in the roadstead of Callequilon.

Life on a trading-ship on the coast of Malabar in the morning of the eighteenth century was not easy. Sickness kept a large number of the crew helpless at all times. Dr. May, the ship's surgeon—a young sawbones of twenty-six years—had so

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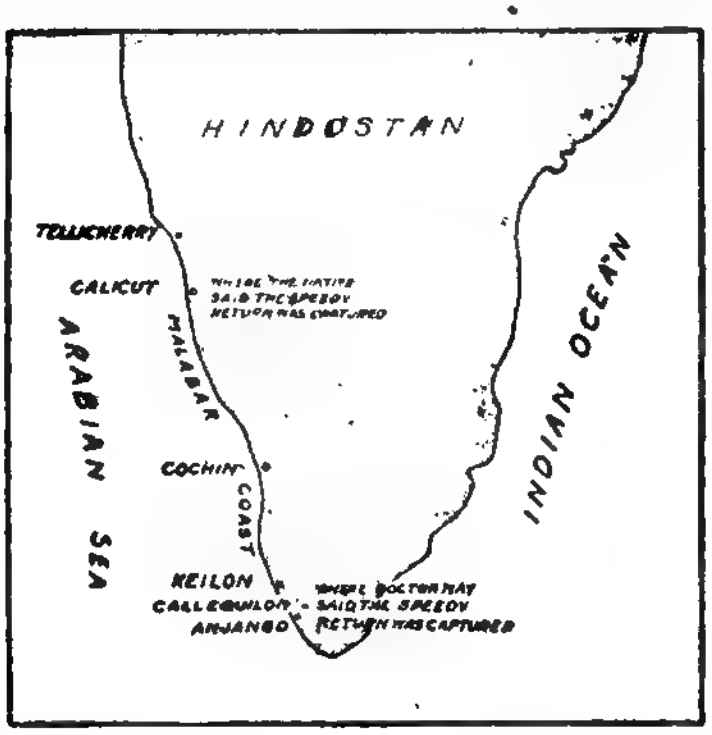
many patients that he had to put up a crude hospital ashore at Callequilon, where the sick were taken from the ship and left while the vessel worked up and down the coast.

Most of the time it was just a job of hard work, either in sailing or stevedoring the



piles of cargo which would be collected at one place and another by various Cogis to await the coming of the *Worcester*. The busiest man aboard was then the supercargo, on whom fell the burden of handling the cargo, keeping the accounts and looking after the financial interests of the owners.

The work and worry of it all gave added force to the prevalent fever when it struck him, and the supercargo slipped through an open port in a weighted canvas shroud to join the half-dozen or so of his companions who had already preceded him to the muddy hammocks that swing eternally in the tides of the sea.

But there was a lighter side. Even in Keilon a sailor could spend his wages, or gape about at the elephants, the palanquins, the ladies with rings in their noses, or stare uncomprehendingly at the fantastic ornamentation of the ancient temple of Siva. Captain Green himself found time for the social turn, and so ingratiated himself with a lady of the country that she gave him a well-trained young black slave, Antonio Francesco, to be his personal servant. Green thought a great deal of the lady's kindness, for he took Antonio aboard, and to make sure he would not lose him chained him to a spike in the forecastle floor, in something of the fashion that seamen are wont to bring home a pet monkey.

All of this was very well, to be sure; but April was to prove a month of hard luck for the *Worcester*. On the tenth of that month the sloop was driven ashore in a gale and destroyed.

In the same storm Green tried to make Keilon, but was forced to anchor between that place and Anjango. Here his cable parted and serious leaks were sprung in his hull. Amid all that, however, he was mannerly enough to fire five rounds in salute to the *Aureng-Zeb*, another trader which happened by and who as politely returned the compliment.

Green was so worried about the condition of his ship that when the weather moderated he invited the master and mate of the *Aureng-Zeb* to come aboard and survey his ship. Their unanimous judgment was that the *Worcester* was then unseaworthy for navigating to England.

That finished the trading-cruise. Adverse circumstances had curtailed the enterprise; yet Green had made on the whole a profitable stay in Malabar. He had operated in a maximum distance of about one hundred and fifty miles; that is, from Anjango to Calicut, though his dodging back and forth had added much to his mileage.

In ordinary event he would have been nearly ready for home. His most serious reverse was in the wreck of his sloop, which his owners had hoped he would be able to sell and convert into goods when he should have finished with her services.

Mr. Brabourne of the fort, again most obliging, advised Green to go to Bengal for repairs; and on the fifth of May, 1703, the *Worcester* set forth to pump her way to the shipyards there.

CAPTAIN THOMAS GREEN might fairly claim a grudge against the elements. They buffeted him in Malabar to the loss of his sloop, the damage of his ship, the lessening of his trading, laid his keel up for a long time in careen at Bengal; and now on his way home to England, after one would suppose the weather had done its very worst for that voyage, it met him off the coast of Scotland and in a seething fury of wind and wave hurled him into the Scottish port of Leith,

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where he was fain to run for shelter. Alas! He had fled the fierce wrath of nature to the yet more terrifying wrath of man.

Scotland, in 1704, when the *Worcester* was thus blown into the port of Leith, was again having her troubles, all of which were turning around the hoodooed Scotch Africa-India Company. That afflicted corporation had already marked the *Content* and the *Speedy Return* off the register as unaccountably missing, when behold a sister ship of these two, the *Annandale*, imprudently venturing into the Thames, was seized by the English East India Company in the assertion of its exclusive rights in the Indies, one of the impudent things which so endeared that company to the rest of the trading world.

Now add that grievance to the dreary Darien affair, already laid, as we have seen, at the door of the English company, and you can understand why "Annandale" became a slogan in Scotland and the focus of all its hate.

Public opinion whirled the Scottish authorities into action. These petitioned the return of the *Annandale*, but in vain; the tenacity of the East India Company, capable of holding a country of scores of millions in its fist, regarded the Scotch protest as lightly as some folks do their debts. To have and to hold was its motto, though all the kilted Highlanders beyond the border skirled in a fury of revenge. The Scot, however, is no baby; nay, he has considerable iron in his own system, and a turn for definite action himself.

"Verra guid, mon," said the North to the South; "verra guid; there's an English ship cam' into Leith; you keep the *Annandale;* we tak' your Englishman."

Which they promptly did—none other than the *Worcester*.

Captain Green was certainly now in a pickle. The Scotch Government seized his ship, and he had to stand around with his hands in his pockets and wait the problematic issue of all this international bickering. And the thousand pounds' worth of patiently collected cargo, the fruit of the peculiar industry of many Cogis—that, too, was sealed by the authorities so that a man dare not take as much as enough for a cup of coffee from the hold.

If he had been an East India Company ship he might have seen a little sense to it all; but what cared he for either the Scotch or the English companies? Very little, indeed, and yet— Well, it was beyond words, even purple maritime words. He plumped down in his cabin to wait.

Now hard by the docks in Leith there was a little parlor groggery kept by a widow named Seaton, who with her nineteen-year-old daughter, Anne, thus labored to make an honest livelihood. A widow, a lovely girl and lots of good Scotch whisky all under one roof—why, the situation seemed just specially made for the advantage of George Haines, the steward of the *Worcester*. What had looked at first like a long, monotonous detention on a seized ship now suddenly brightened with the most attractive promise.

George accepted the opportunity so readily that shortly he became almost a part of the Seaton home, and in an admirably brief space of time nothing less than the accepted suitor of the fair Anne herself. That meant, as any one could see with half an eye, that eventually George Haines would be the proprietor of this neat little business. No more stewing around the East Indies for him—that was all in the past, or very soon would be. Well, truly, it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

Of course Mrs. Seaton had neighbors, and just as much of course she talked to them about her business, her customers and her customers' business. One of these neighbors was a dear old lady, by name Mrs. Wilkie, also a widow. She was one of those sad folk who flit down to the docks to see every ship come in and who speak to every sailor that steps ashore, in the quest of loved ones long silent upon the far-off seas.

Every one knew Mrs. Wilkie's story. She was the mother of a bonnie lad by the name of Andrew, who some three years before this had gone as surgeon on the ship of Captain Drummond, the *Speedy Return*, for a voyage to the Indies, and who, after one letter from Madagascar by way of Mauritius, had not been heard from this long time; neither he nor his ship nor his captain.

And now the old lady lived with her other son, Jamie, a tailor, and whenever a ship came into port from the East Indies, no matter what the hour of the day or night, the sailors would see a little old gray lady waiting to ask them for news of the *Speedy Return*. To Mrs. Wilkie, then, Mrs.

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Seaton made mention of the *Worcester* and of George Haines, its steward.

Mrs. Wilkie and Jamie hastened together to the Widow Seaton's to interview George. They found him in the parlor comforting himself with a big tumbler of grog. Jamie bought a drink and talked easily of the voyage and hoped that George and all the others had fared well.

This seizure business—that was bad, of course; but it would all come out all right. George felt it was coming out all right for him as it was. Jamie coughed, shifted a bit in his chair and at length came out with the vital question—

"Would you be meeting a ship in your travels, the *Speedy Return*, captain Rab Drummond, out o' Glasgie?"

Mrs. Wilkie's heart waited. The clock ticked loudly. The Widow Seaton paused with her potato-paring knife poised in mid-air. On the kitchen threshold merry-faced Anne stopped and gazed as if she were watching a stage play.

"Sink me! What have I to do with Captain Drummond?"

Bang! came the tumbler on the table; the steward's loose, foolish jaw was shoved forward defiantly. Yet what was there about him? Something—yes, the steward is in the grip of a great fear.

Since frequenting the widow's shop George had heard quite a lot about this Captain Drummond, because the captain, young Andrew Wilkie and doubtless many others of his crew had belonged in this city of Edinburgh, of which Leith is the port and a suburb. Folk were always asking him about this Drummond till he was fair sick of it. He leaned over and stuck his fat lips against Jamie's ear.

"While we was on the coast of Malabar," he began with solemn, nautical preface, "a Dutch ship told us that Captain Drummond, out o' Scotland was turned—a pirate!"

He leaned back and gazed at Jamie's astonished face. Yes, he had achieved an effect; maybe he could get another.

"Aye, sir, so we manned our sloop, we did, putting guns and patereroes aboard, and got ready to give the Scot a pound or two o' lead."

But now the creeklet of his imagination went dry.

"He never came," he ended rather ineffectively.

Jamie was beaten. He drew off his artillery and departed to allow a light fireship to come alongside. But all Anne got for her wiles and her work was, as she put it—

"He found they had a design to pump him; but they should not be the wiser of him, though what he had said he had said."

He was no ship to be pumped, was George—but you see the implication that there was water in the hold.

Among the patrons of the house was a jolly old gunner, Will Wood, who used to come down from the fort in all his splendid regimentals to drink toddy and tickle the chin of the laughing Anne. He got interested in the "pumping" of George Haines, steward of the seized ship which lay outside at the dock, and resolved to try the bluff, hearty, man-to-man approach. He loaded George up with whisky until he "fell into a melancholy fit," from the burnt-sienna depths of which he emitted this frightful croak—

"It is a wonder that since we did not sink at sea, that God did not make the ground open and swallow us up when we are come ashore, for the wickedness that has been committed during this last voyage on board that old —— Bess."

By the "old —— Bess" he meant the *Worcester*, whose spars might be seen through the parlor window dripping in the mournful rain.

Will Wood slapped the steward's knee.

"Come, my lad, take a turn on the links; you'll feel better; what's a bit of wet?"

Dolefully George tottered out of the hot parlor. Behind him the genial artilleryman turned and winked portentously at the watching company.

"Now's the time," said that knowing wink; "we've almost got him."

The pair strolled out by the castle; they walked on the golf links; they became intimate. Said jolly Will Wood at the right moment—

"I heard a friend of mine say that he knew a man who got it right from a fellow who could swear to the truth of it, that the uncle of your first mate, Madder, was burned in oil for attempting to set fire to the Dutch ships at Amsterdam."

George stopped in his walk. He raised a finger toward the sky—a reeling, waving finger—in solemn affirmation.

"If what Mr. Madder had done during this last voyage," he declared slowly,

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"were as well known, he deserved as much as his uncle had met with."

Under all the circumstances that remark could mean only one thing—the *Worcester* had been concerned in the pirating of the *Speedy Return* and the murder of her crew, who were then supposed to be all dead. Incredible as it may seem, this drunken maundering of steward Haines, coupled with the unintelligent suspicions of the Wilkies, the Seatons and others, passed from the waterfront to the city until it reached the officers of the law who—no more intelligent—made it the basis for a charge of piracy and murder against Green and his crew, upon which they were all arrested and marched off to the dark holes of the old Tolbooth Prison. The *Annandale* was forgotten; the *Speedy Return* and Captain Drummond took its place, and all Scotland roared with one voice for vengeance.

WHY did George Haines thus seek to link the *Worcester* with the piracy of the *Speedy Return?* The conversations above reported between the steward and the Wilkies, the Seatons and Wood are exactly as given on the subsequent trial of Captain Green.

At that trial the lawyers for Green and the rest of the crew accused with him of the piracy of the *Speedy Return* and the murder of Drummond, sought to explain Haines' motive by his love affair with Anne Seaton and his desire to become proprietor of the little Seaton tavern. They also laid much of his talk to the influence of liquor.

There is something in both of these arguments; but it is probable that a greater motive than these two dominated him, and that was fear. With the state of the public mind in Scotland in the condition it was about Darien, the *Annandale*, the English and English East Indian traders, it is not unlikely that a notion blew about the waterfront when the *Worcester* came in to Leith and was seized that perhaps this was one of the hated East India Company ships, from which it was just a short step to the suspicion that, as such, or at any rate as an Englishman trading in the East Indies, the *Worcester* might have had a hand in the disappearance of the long-overdue *Speedy Return*.

Evidently, reasoned the Scotchmen, the *Speedy Return* has come to harm; nobody would harm a Scotch ship in the Far East but some Englishman; here was an Englishman from the Indies; *ergo* he probably had pirated the Scotchman. This thought, more or less tangible, was all about the *Worcester's* men as they loafed on the waterfront.

In those times, such was the rigor of the criminal law and the uncertainty of acquittal, that innocent men would rush to turn King's evidence and take the lesser evil of imprisonment rather than execution. That this was the condition of things would seem to be shown by the fact that Dr. May, the *Worcester's* surgeon, became King's evidence, as did the slave Francesco and another black who had been shipped at Malabar, and as many others made confessions as could hope for leniency. This fear, then, working on the steward's liquor-muddled brain, together with his desire to ingratiate himself with the Seatons, brought about the last act of a play opened by John Bowen in the Bay of Antongil in Madagascar.

With all of Scotland and north to south and east to west crying for vengeance, very little time was lost in bringing Captain Green and all the rest of his men, excluding the doctor and the two blacks, and including George Haines, who somehow missed the privilege of becoming King's evidence, to their trial in the old court in Parliament Square in Edinburgh.

So important was the case considered that the Scotch privy council appointed four extra judges and a large corps of assistant prosecutors to represent the Crown. The *Worcester* men were not undefended, however, for a very curious circumstance brought to their help, and at that without expense to them, what was perhaps the very flower of the Edinburgh bar.

This was the circumstance: If Green and his men should be convicted on this trial of piracy their ship, the *Worcester*, would be forfeited to the Crown, as was the case with all captured pirate ships. Now the Scotch Africa-India Company did not care a rap whether Green and the rest of them were hanged or not, but it did want very badly to get the *Worcester* to add to its diminished fleet, a result which would follow if the *Worcester* were merely taken in reprisal for the *Annandale*. Hence it became vital to the Scotch company to clear these men of the crime, and that is why it

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sent the best lawyers that money could buy into court for that purpose.

What a contradictory situation! Here is all Scotland, still raw with the sore of Darien, shouting for the lives of these Englishmen, and here is the company, inheritor of the Darien disaster, employing the most skilled counsel it could to secure the acquittal of the very same Englishmen!

The witnesses for the Crown were Dr. May, the two natives, James Wilkie, Anne Seaton, Will Wood and one or two minor characters. The doctor and the two natives told the most outrageous fabrication of perjury that ever blackened a courtroom. They made up a great story of how the *Worcester* attacked and captured a "Scotch ship," name unknown but which by implication was the *Speedy Return*.

The doctor said that the fight occurred off Callequilon, where he had his hospital, and that he heard the firing of the guns. The basis for this particular invention was the saluting by the *Worcester* of the *Aureng-Zeb*.

One of the native witnesses said that the capture occurred at Calicut, more than one hundred miles from the place where the doctor claimed to have heard the noise of it! The doctor must have had a great pair of ears.

The other native, the slave, said he had been chained to the forecastle floor, and all he knew was what the other native had told him about the attack on the Scotch ship. He, however, did make the damaging admission that the other native had come aboard the *Worcester* only the day before that ship sailed for Bengal for repairs, and long after the time of the alleged piracy.

It was all a compete farrago of absurdity, and these witnesses knew it but were lying to save their own lives. The lawyers for the defense completely exposed the whole inconsistency of the testimony and knocked the prosecution into a cocked hat on the law of the case; but nothing would do; the Englishmen were not being tried by the court or the jury but by public opinion—always omnipotent if not omniscient.

The verdict was guilty. The awful sentence of death was imposed, and Scotland exultantly waited for the finale.

The morning of April 4, 1704, was the time appointed for the execution of the first three of the condemned—Captain Green, First Mate Madder and Gunner John Simpson. Thereafter on successive Wednesdays the rest were to be hanged in like batches of threes.

The privy council met in Parliament House to issue the final death warrant. But they hesitated to do so, because they themselves realized that they had acted under the pressure of an uninformed public demand for the lives of the accused; and it is very likely that they had hoped all along that the people would have been satisfied with the trial merely and that thereafter the excitement would have died away.

But not so. While they were consulting together on the fatal morning a huge mob jammed into the square and began to batter in the doors of the council chambers. The warrant was signed.

Even at that when the lord chancellor left the building, the cry went out that the council had reprieved the pirates; a rush was made for the chancellor's carriage, the panels were crashed in, the window-glass was smashed, and only the bayonets of the city guards saved that official's life. That and the fact that as they surged about the frightened chancellor a tremendous shout from in front of the Tolbooth gates drew their attention from him to that which they thirsted to behold—the ill-fated Green, Madder and Simpson departing in the death cart for the place of execution.

The deaths of these three men did slake the public craving for blood, and one by one the rest of the *Worcester's* crew were turned loose and left the country and the pages of this history at the same time.

Bowen's crime was paid for. What a joke Bowen would have accounted it all, and how the best Caribbean circles would have chuckled!

Five days before the deaths of Green, Madder and Simpson, but too late to save them, our old friends Israel Phippany and Peter Freeland came home to England and revealed the true fate of the two good ships the *Content* and the *Speedy Return!*

IN TAKING these pirate tales from the law recourse has been had to the most authentic sources of the subject—the verbatim reports of the court proceedings in which the pirates here portrayed were prosecuted. So far as we are aware, this is the first popular presentation of the subject of piracy from this point of view. This derivation of these articles makes for the special informative

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value of the series. You have here the accounts of this picturesque class of sea-brigands as the activity of each has been determined by the examination of witnesses, the arguments of counsel, the instructions of judges and the verdicts of juries. In comparison with these records, the narratives of lay writers on the subject of piracy were frequently found to contain mistakes. Where collateral history has been consulted to necessarily supplement matters not concerned in the trials, the most authoritative has been sought. The technical trials themselves may be likened to maps; these stories to paintings faithfully following the maps.

A Transaction in Heads

AN INCIDENT IN THE AFFAIRS OF MOHAMED ALI

by

George E. Holt

Author of "Ransom," "Mohamed Ali and the Father of Donkeys," etc.

"There are no tricks in the head that hangs over the city gates."—Moroccan Proverb.

IT WAS a very successful Sultan of Morocco whose royal mind conceived that brevity, whose royal lips made it very well known and whose royal power put a kick into it which made it an important factor in his reign. There is something extraordinarily suggestive—hypnotic—about a head drying on a big rusty iron hook protruding from time-worn gray walls. It is almost impossible not to feel that it is your own head which is looking down with glassy eyes focused upon nothing, that they are your own lips which seem to be so very thirsty. Inevitably you will close your own eyelids in answer to the straining of the eyes above, and lick your own lips to give relief to the parched mouth crookedly grinning down upon you.

The skull of Yorick was a shallow stage trick compared to the head on the city gate. One, only the bleached framework which once was draped with expressive flesh and contained a human mind; the other—still human—the rumpled shock of hair like that of one just arising from sleep, the wrinkled forehead puzzled as if the head were still wondering what life was all about—as perhaps it is; glazed, protruding eyes, searching, perhaps, for the head which shall decorate a near-by hook; a mouth which, as it grins or droops, may be an index to the nature of that Paradise guaranteed by the Prophet to the Faithful. And, looking, one may recall what John Bunyan said in his prison upon observing one being led out by the hangman, and may paraphrase, saying—

"There, save for the grace of Allah, hangs my own head."

Now, the bearings of this upon the matter in hand were manifold. Because there was not only one head at stake, but three. And, as is the case among selfish humans, each head had a very definite desire to continue to function as the upper extremity of a human body, rather than as a decoration for the Fez gate and a stimulus to the philosophy of heads still unhung. One of these heads belonged to Mohamed Ali, the other two graced the persons of Kaid Aisa and Kaid Brahim, who were minor, but not entirely unimportant, Moroccan chieftains, for

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the moment attached to the sultan's court.

Mohamed Ali, outlaw, with a price for his capture dead or alive, lay in the little village of Nonwish, among the soft brown Anghera hills, and used his head a good deal for laughing at the efforts being made to catch him. It was a good head—Mohamed Ali's—a big head, as became a big man; a brown head, as became a man thoroughly baked in the furnace of life—tanned brown skin, brown clipped beard and mustache, brown eyes that laughed oftener than the generous mouth, but which could harden as instantly. Yes; and a good head inside as well. Otherwise it would have ceased to laugh before the eyes had become quite so all-observant and wise.

The other two heads, as I have said, were at court. Now, in most places it is an honor to be attached to the royal ménage, but in Morocco it is quite often something else. In the case of the two *kaids*, for example. These two had seen fit, not actually to conspire against the sultan and his authority, but actually to consider the usefulness of conspiring against him. There is a very great difference, of course. The Sultan of Morocco was quite practical about these affairs, as one becomes when a thing is a matter of routine. When his system of information was at fault and a rebellion became a fact instead of an hypothesis, he would usually quote his favorite proverb concerning heads, and there was little delay between the enunciation of a royal opinion and its transliteration into fact.

But, when it was only a matter of indiscreet thinking and whispering and hobnobbing—a playing about the edges of treason—his Majesty was wont to say:

"Let So-and-So be brought to me. Assuredly if he has opportunity to observe my wisdom and merit he will cease to think evil of me and to desire to plot against me."

Wherefore So-and-So was promptly given some little chores to do around the royal palace, and the sultan's wisdom became manifest. Never did the newcomer continue his plotting—he was too closely watched, and the royal executioner was too real.

Thus it was in the case of Kaids Aisa and Brahim. They had had their heads together when the long arm of the sultan had suddenly seized them and hauled them to the palace for a visit. Very naturally, considering the sort of men they were, Kaid Aisa promptly accused Kaid Brahim of having betrayed the affair, beating Kaid Brahim to the accusation by about three words. The sultan's officers prevented them from killing each other, but could not prevent them from continuing to wish venemously to do so.

And then, upon a certain day, news of the latest escape of Mohamed Ali from his pursuers came to the royal ears. The royal lips uttered a number of unexpurgated opinions, the royal mind reflected a while, and then the royal eye, catching sight of Kaid Aisa, lightened, and a command went forth which caused Kaid Aisa and Kaid Brahim shortly to stand in the august presence, casting black looks upon one another.

"One of you," said his Majesty without emphasis, as if he were saying that it looked like rain, "should certainly die."

"Yes, your Majesty, Kaid Brahim," agreed Kaid Aisa.

"Kaid Aisa, assuredly, your Majesty," said the other.

"There seems," observed the sultan, "to be a difference of opinion."

He smiled—a little—enough to make a contrast to the following scowl.

"We suspect that you both should die. But hear us—one of you shall live—*inshallah;* the head of the other shall grace the Bab-el-Fahs. The one who lives will be the one who brings us the head of Mohamed Ali—upon whom rest seven thousand curses and the displeasure of Allah. Each of you shall have fifty horsemen. And by this day of the coming month one or both of you will be—in Paradise. Now relieve us of the unpleasantness of your presence."

THUS it came about that two *kaids* and their horsemen ran about among the Anghera hills seeking for the head of Mohamed Ali. Kaid Aisa, who had a certain sense of humor, smiled grimly at the situation, saying:

"It is a puzzle in mathematics. Within a month I must have two heads in order to have one head, and if I have only one head, I shall have none. *Allah akbar!* The *alim* at the *madrassah* at Fez can show by algebra that nothing from nothing leaves one. I am in a fair way to prove a greater contradiction. And I really have but half a chance to keep my head, because of that swine, Kaid Brahim."

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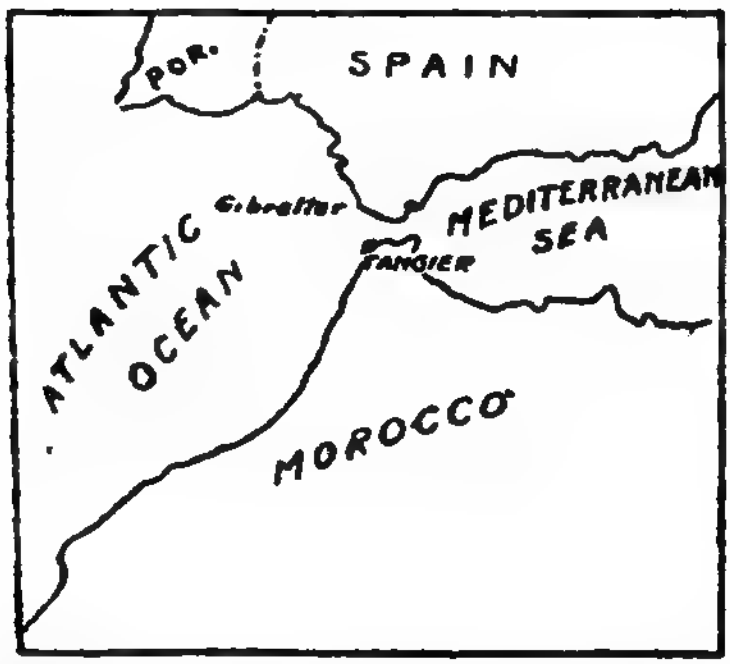
Kaid Brahim, having no sense of humor at all, merely cursed everybody whose name he could remember—but most of all, Kaid Aisa.

Very quickly the news came to Mohamed Ali. From the south, that Kaid Aisa was



ranging the hills with fifty horse; from the west, that Kaid Brahim was hot and angry upon an imaginary trail. And from the court, where there was one who was friend to Mohamed Ali, a somewhat amusing account of the reasons why the *kaids* were thus harrying Anghera and the Fahs.

Now, giving Mohamed Ali information was in no wise certain casting pearls before *haloof*. Wherefore he reviewed the facts which he had, felt a sudden tingle of premonition—the birth-thrills of an idea—and then laughed so long and so loudly that half the children in the village were set to laughing also.

Shortly thereafter he summoned to him a certain shaven-headed, low-browed, black-skinned man, clad simply in a one-piece brown *djellaba*, who fell upon his knees and kissed the foot of Mohamed Ali. Mohamed Ali being *shareef*, or descendant of the Prophet, to touch his person brought merit.

"Rise, Fellal," said Mohamed Ali, "and give ear to my commands."

The black rose.

"You know the man, Ibn Nasser, of Arzila—he who is offensive in our eyes because of his lies and his stealings!"

"*Aiwa, Sidi;* him I know."

"Good. Then bring him to me."

"And when shall this be done?" asked the black.

"As soon as may be. Other matters wait upon it. Tomorrow if possible; the day after, at latest."

"Tomorrow then—*inshallah*," said the black. "I go speedily."

Mohamed Ali watched him strip off his *djellaba*, sling a short rifle across his back, don the *djellaba* and start off along the trail which led to Arzila.

"I wonder," he observed to himself, "if, as we are taught, all believers, no matter how evil, go from here to Paradise! I do not think so. I think the priests have made that up for reasons of their own, pecuniary ones, no doubt. However—I am hungry, and this world concerns me more than the next."

He clapped his hands, and shortly was confronted by a great dish of *kesk'soo*, garnished with vegetables and topped by a baked chicken.

"*Bismillah*," said Mohamed Ali, and plunged in his fingers. "I hope that Fellal will be back by tomorrow. I become tired of inactivity."

Through the favor of Allah the desire of Mohamed Ali was granted. On the following midday Fellal appeared leading a sweating fat man by a rope around his neck, and made obeisance before Mohamed Ali.

"Here, master," he said, "is the fat pig I went to catch."

"It is well," approved Mohamed Ali, paying no attention to the fat and shaking Ibn Nasser. "Tie him up; feed him—a little; set a guard to watch him. Then return to me.

Fellal led off the captive, cursing him gently, as one would curse a stubborn donkey.

Now, in this time, the waters of the minds of Kaid Aisa and Kaid Brahim were made muddy with fear. For the month of the sultan's grace was speeding as only such a time can speed, and Mohamed Ali's capture seemed no nearer than Paradise—not so near, in fact. The chief fear which squeezed the hearts of each was that the other would capture Mohamed Ali, and thus by a single stroke of fortune, would secure his own life and revenge against his enemy. Which thought was unbearable; if both should die, well and good—that would be as Allah should will. But the real sting of the death which awaited *one* of them for failure, would be in the knowledge that the other still lived. This frame of mind is not a good one

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to be in—it drives men to extremities, and extremities are always evil.

But, upon a day, the hearts of both were lightened and made glad with relief. To Kaid Aisa, in the early morning, came an evil-looking black, who called down the curses of Allah upon one Mohamed Ali, and cried out loudly and passionately for revenge against him. He showed white crossed stripes upon his shiny, oily back where, he said, the whip of Mohamed Ali had struck.

Pressed for information, he admitted that he knew where Mohamed Ali lay—and then went on to point out that one thing only prevented him from cutting Mohamed Ali's heart out as he slept.

"And that, O man of misery?" asked the *kaid*.

"And that, O Protector of the Weak, is the fact that, after I had done so, I would be caught and crucified by the people of—" he caught himself—"of the village where Mohamed Ali now is. But——"

He paused to cast a speculative eye over the camp.

"But, if there were such a force as yours near by, to which I might fly for protection, then——"

His dark scowl needed no interpretation.

Wherefore it was not many minutes before Kaid Aisa had reached the conclusion that the black should lead him to the vicinity of the village which sheltered Mohamed Ali. There the black might commit his deed of vengeance and immediately seek safety in the *kaid's* camp. Provided he brought as passport the head of Mohamed Ali—not otherwise.

The black deliberated over this plan a while. Then—

"There is, I believe, O *Sidi*, a matter of a reward—is there not!"

"There may be; I do not know; neither do I care. The reward for me is——"

He stopped. It was just as well not to tell any one that his own head was forfeit unless he could secure that of Mohamed Ali.

"Well—let it pass, *Sidi*—let it pass. It will be reward enough for me to feel my knife in the muscles of Mohamed Ali's neck. Let us, then, do as you say."

And to Kaid Brahim there came one who said he had deserted from the camp of Kaid Aisa, and asked permission to join the followers of Kaid Brahim.

"He who deserts one master will desert two," observed Kaid Brahim, and was about to give orders to his men to send the deserter away. But the hand of Fate caused him to inquire casually the reason for the desertion.

"Allah!" exclaimed the man. "I am no coward, and life with Kaid Aisa was pleasant until he must decide to lead us all to sudden and complete destruction. Dead, I am of no use to myself or any one else. And when Kaid Aisa says he rides into the very stronghold of Mohamed Ali, because an enemy of Mohamed Ali has offered to give him Mohamed Ali's head— But the matter does not interest you. I only——"

Now were Kaid Brahim's eyes staring and his face flushed and his fingers picking nervously at his red velvet belt.

"You say that an enemy of Mohamed Ali is to deliver his head to Kaid Aisa? Is that what you said?"

"Yes, O Master. A black, whom Mohamed Ali has beaten viciously. Kaid Aisa will camp close to Nonwish, where Mohamed Ali lies, and tonight the black will kill Mohamed Ali, thereafter at once seeking safety in the camp of Kaid Aisa. And in exchange for this safety he will bring to the *kaid* the head of Mohamed Ali.

These words were as lashes upon the heart of Kaid Brahim. Vision of the head of Mohamed Ali in a sack at Kaid Aisa's saddle-bow called up another picture which was very far from his liking. He had observed, during his brief sojourn at court, a goodly number of executions. His stomach turned over at the memory. And flight from the wrath of the sultan would avail him nothing; he had not the guts of Mohamed Ali—and, if he tried to escape punishment— He remembered one man whom the sultan had ordered sewed up in a rawhide and then placed out for the flaming sun to bake—and squeeze.

Wherefore, after lengthy years of torture, the mind of Kaid Brahim observed that there was only one possible course to follow. That was, to ride with his men to Nonwish, overpower Kaid Aisa after he had secured the head, and take it away from him. The letter of the sultan's word was the law, and the sultan had said "The one who brings me the head," not "The one who slays Mohamed Ali." Moreover, Kaid Brahim suspected that it was entirely immaterial to his Majesty which of the *kaids* brought the head, as indeed it was.

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THUS there were activities that day in the camps of both *kaids* and also in the village of Nonwish, but there is no need to examine into the details of these activities. One may judge the tree by the fruit thereof. The fruit in this case was that within two hours after darkness—there was no moon, but the stars afforded a little light—Kaid Aisa and his men were encamped within a quarter of a mile east of the village of Nonwish, in a little cluster of trees; and Kaid Brahim and his followers were bivouacked slightly to the south of the village. Brahim himself was hidden alone in a clump of palmetto which permitted him to watch the camp of Kaid Aisa, and particularly that individual's tent.

Brahim had been on observation-post little more than an hour, when he saw a dark figure pass the guard and approach the *kaid's* tent. He could see that the figure carried no bag, and that there was no tell-tale bulge to the *koob*, or hood of the outer garment, which falls down over the back like a monk's cowl. Very shortly the figure reappeared, accompanied by Kaid Aisa. Together they left the camp, and went into the darkness toward Nonwish. Kaid Brahim followed them cautiously.

After a while the two stopped; Kaid Aisa sat down beside a little hill of palmetto and the black went on. Kaid Brahim likewise found a seat upon the ground. He knew that it was yet too early for Mohamed Ali to sleep; that the wait might be a long one.

An hour, and another, passed. Then a black figure materialized out of the darkness, running swiftly. It looked like a hunchback, but as it drew nearer, Kaid Brahim could see that the camel-hump was caused by a bag with something bulky in it. He crept forward stealthily, until he was scarcely a rod from the others.

"Here, O master," said the black, "is the head of that pig, Mohamed Ali. Allah! He had a neck like a bull. My knife bent somewhat in it." He tipped the bag and a head rolled upon the ground. Kaid Aisa stepped back hurriedly, away from the thing; then, as it had fallen upon its face in the yellow dust, he turned it over gingerly with his toe. A brown-bearded face, with twisted, sneering mouth stared up at him in the starlight.

"Here!" he cried suddenly. "Where are you going?"

The black was fifty feet away.

"To the safety of your camp, O master," he shouted over his shoulder. "And that most speedily."

Apparently he did not see the crouching figure of Kaid Brahim.

Hurriedly Kaid Aisa thrust the head into the bag, picked up the bag and turned—to meet the flickering *kumiah* of Kaid Brahim. Brahim indulged in no idle chivalry, no false conception of honor or mercy. Either he or Kaid Aisa must die. Such being the case, the speedier the death the better—for the survivor. So he thrust, and thrust again, and the long curved blade crept between Kaid Aisa's ribs and made great gashes in his heart, which thereupon ceased to function. Not, however, before Aisa had drawn his own knife for a single ineffectual thrust, and called one final curse down upon his killer.

Kaid Brahim shouldered the bag and went swiftly back to his camp. At daybreak he was on his way to the sultan, a bulging sack tied on the saddle in front of him. Now and then he carressed the bulge gently; he really liked Mohamed Ali—now. And his evil heart was singing a little song—a little song of revenge—and life.

But swiftly as Kaid Brahim traveled, another—a black man named Fellal—traveled still more swiftly upon the favorite horse of Mohamed Ali. Thus it came about that when Kaid Brahim rode in to the palace yard and demanded audience of his Majesty for himself and the head of Mohamed Ali, Fellal was already on his way back to Nonwish.

"Audience will be granted at once," said an official, who smiled peculiarly. "Follow me—but first let me see the head."

He drew the dried and spotted thing from the sack, and examined it closely, while the smile deepened.

"Alas!" he said. "I knew Mohamed Ali. Once I was his friend—" and beneath his breath—"as perhaps I still am."

Very soon Kaid Brahim knelt in the presence, and rose, in obedience to a royal command, to take the head from the sack and hold it for the sultan's gaze. Doing so, Kaid Brahim was amazed to see a smile come into the sultan's face, broaden, break into a laugh, a roar—and to see his Majesty unmajestically lie back on his divan and shake the velvet hangings with his guffaws. And upon the faces of the sultan's

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attendants he noted expressions which disturbed him.

Finally the sultan straightened up, and drew a folded paper from his belt.

"Hear ye, oh valiant *kaid*," he said. "Listen well—because there is little more for you to hear. This—" he extended the paper—"this is a message in the handwriting of Mohamed Ali, which we know well, and about which there can be no mistake."

"He will never write another," observed Kaid Brahim.

"No? Let us see. In this note he tells us that Kaids Aisa and Brahim, whom we sent against him to bring us his head, and not to fight between themselves, fought each other near the village of Nonwish, and that Kaid Aisa was killed by Kaid Brahim. Is that the truth?"

Now fear was upon Brahim, and he licked his lips and could not think. But he made an effort.

"It was because, Dispenser of Justice, I desired to see the pleasure in your eyes when you looked upon the head of your enemy, Mohamed Ali. Therefore—therefore I took it from Kaid Aisa, having to kill him in the taking. And great was your Majesty's laughter and pleasure when you gazed upon the head."

The sultan seemed about to laugh again, but the grin swiftly changed to a frown, as Kaid Brahim continued, without permission, in his fear:

"And the very words, O Commander of the Faithful, were not 'he who kills Mohamed Ali,' but 'he who brings us the head of Mohamed Ali.' *Allah akbar!* I have brought the head."

"But how could Mohamed Ali write this letter, O fool, if his head were in a bag?"

"Allah only knows that," answered the *kaid*.

"Allah—" said the sultan. "And quite a few others. If we could capture Mohamed Ali we think we should make him Grand Vizier. We read the rest of the letter: 'Also,' he says, 'it appears to me that the killing was over a small matter—a matter of a head. Kaid Brahim carries the head to your Majesty, wherefore you may look upon it for yourself. Perhaps also you will desire to ascertain from Kaid Brahim what value he and Kaid Aisa set upon the head of Ibn Nasser, the usurer and thief of Arzila. It was said, too, that he looked somewhat like me—and so I feared that I might be unjustly blamed for some of his misdeeds—if he were permitted to live.'"

"Ibn Nasser—Ibn Nasser," stuttered the shaking *kaid*.

"No other," answered the sultan, looking at the head. "We recognize him. And so——"

His under jaw shot out. It was the silent order to the executioner, which his father had invented.

"Ibn Nasser—Ibn Nasser—" chattered the *kaid*.

He stared at the head, his eyes protruding, and his lips twisted in a horrible smile—exactly as they did the following day over the Bab-el-Fahs.

MOHAMED ALI, eating *kesk'soo* in Nonwish, paused between two handfuls to ponder a moment.

"I wonder," said he to Mohamed Ali, "whether after all the priest made up that part of the story or not. If not—well, then there will be at least three newcomers in Paradise today."

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Red Autumn

A FIVE-PART STORY—PART I

by

Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Tameless Days," "Long Rifles."

FOREWORD

ONE of the feeblest of nations had declared war against one of the oldest and most powerful of kingdoms. The first blood shed was that of Americans, by Americans, in the rioting at Baltimore.

The decisive step was taken by the republic on the eighteenth day of June, 1812. At that time General William Hull, Governor of the Territory of Michigan, was leading two thousand soldiers through the forests of northern Ohio on his way to Detroit, where he was to discourage Indian raids; for the red men were forgetting the lesson taught them by General Harrison at Tippecanoe in the preceding November.

On the day war was declared the Secretary of War started two letters to Hull. The first, unimportant as it contained no mention of the state of war, was sent by a special messenger, who overtook the army and finished his errand on the twenty-fourth of June. The second letter, all-important as it announced the momentous news, was sent by mail to Cleveland, whence it slowly followed the army and was delivered to Hull on the second of July. Every British officer in Canada knew that war was on several days before the American commander was apprised of the fact.

Hull endeavored to invade Canada, it being a popular fallacy that the Canadians would welcome his army with open arms and turn against the mother-country. The American general was soon forced to fall back to Detroit, which he surrendered, thereby losing all of Michigan for the United States at the very outbreak of hostilities.

The advent of war was marked by increased stagnation of business in the Eastern States, and a closing-down of all commercial activities on the Mississippi, now that the route to the Atlantic ports *via* New Orleans was being closed. The Pacific Fur Company's enterprise on the Columbia collapsed, and John Jacob Astor's vision of a mightier America ended when his request for a few soldiers went unheeded.

Had his call for assistance been answered history would have been written differently. Not only would Astoria have been saved, but the country would have been opened for settlement by Americans, and the western coast of the United States would have extended from the Spanish possessions in the south to the Russian holdings in the north. These and other setbacks gave a dreary aspect to national affairs even when viewed through the eyes of the militants.

For several years the political pot had been bubbling and seething, and now it had boiled over. If Great Britain had seized more than nine hundred American ships, as the Republicans incessantly reminded the people, then, declared the Federalists, France was a like offender; and they pointed to nearly six hundred American craft seized by Napoleon's navy. Both parties, however, met on common ground in agreeing that the young republic had been buffeted around long enough by European

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powers, and that only by an armed protest could the United States save its self-respect and justify its national existence.

Because of the Republicans' lingering sentimental regard for France, kept alive by recollections of the Revolutionary War, it was finally decided that to halt further disregard of the republic's rights the gauntlet should be thrown to Great Britain. With a small majority deciding the issue it had to happen that much discord, vituperation and confusion should follow. Regardless of political complexion the people as a whole were uneasy over the country's lack of preparedness. The loss of Michigan brought dismay.

That great Shawnee war-chief and leader, Tecumseh, was now a brigadier-general in the British Army with two thousand Indians under his command. He was still smarting over the defeat at Tippecanoe, when his red confederacy was shattered by the premature attack made on Harrison's army by his twin brother, the Prophet. But now, with Great Britain as his ally, the famous warrior began dreaming wonderful dreams of Napoleonic grandeur.

With few exceptions the upper Mississippi tribes were quick to accept his war-pipes. Could the upper Missouri Indians, outnumbering their Mississippi brothers four to one, be induced to smoke Tecumseh's war-tobacco there was nothing to stop Canada's border from crowding down to the Platte River.

Scant notice is given by history to the vitally important work done by Manuel Lisa, Spanish born and a true American, in preventing the terrific tragedy of a general uprising of the Missouri Indians. Yet Lisa and his followers played a more important part than did some much heralded military leaders. By their unending efforts and one-hundred-per-cent. Americanism they held a sullen and resentful people from smoking with Tecumseh. As it was, St. Louis lived on the edge of fear, expecting to be attacked, while settlements were raided and scenes of bloody warfare were being enacted only fourscore miles up the river.

With no blare of martial music and without the bravery of military trappings Lisa and his type worked their keelboats up the lonely Missouri and did their full duty. Some found graves awaiting them; some, unchronicled and unsung, lived to return and resume the routine of living. Their mighty endeavors were but a part of the day's hard task.

CHAPTER I

THE NEWS STARTS NORTH

PRESIDENT MADISON, partial to France, signed his war message on the first of June, 1812. It was confidently expected by him and his party that both Houses of Congress would pass the bill for him to sign. Eighteen days later war was declared against Great Britain, but by too narrow a margin to suit the conservative element. The Federalists fought it tooth and nail. In the lining-up of the two parties the commercial States above Pennsylvania cast seventeen ballots for war and thirty-two against. But Pennsylvania and the States south and west carried the day by a vote of sixty-two for war and only thirty-two opposed. It was of tremendous importance that this news be conveyed to the Mississippi as rapidly as possible; and without waiting to be named as an official messenger I set forth.

For months the Mississippi trade and the infant fur industry had languished under the black threat of hostilities. I had taken advantage of the dull times to return to the East and visit my people in Maryland. It resulted that I lingered much about the national capital and listened to the never ending debates in Congress and the acrimonious exchanges between individuals in the taverns and lodging-houses and in the streets.

It did seem that we must fight either France or England if we would escape fighting among ourselves. If I had had a notion of settling down in the East the idea went glimmering after a few weeks of being cooped up in towns and listening to the partizan harangues.

For seven years I had lived in a vastly different environment and had called the little town of St. Louis my home. I had participated in the border interest created by the return of the Lewis and Clark Expedition from a hitherto unknown country. The detailed information concerning the possibilities of the fur trade brought back by those explorers had quite set me

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afire as it had my betters. The uncertainty of the times and the knowledge that the upper Missouri tribes were under the influence of traders from the Hudson's Bay and the Northwest Companies at first stifled our initiative, and the majority of the two thousand people wandering about the town under the hill talked much but did little. The greater number of the population were of French blood, taken over as good citizens of the United States when Napoleon received the purchase price for the Territory of Louisiana, and in their philosophy and leisurely manner of living were in a decided contrast to the pushing, shoving Americans steadily coming in. For the first two years I was up and down the Mississippi, getting acquainted with New Orleans and building up a pride on being a veteran river man.

Then I met Manuel Lisa and in his employ ascended the Missouri four times, and after the first trip was ready to confess I knew nothing of river hardships until I passed under his tutelage. I had encountered river pirates on the lower Mississippi but they were as nothing to the traps set by nature all along the lonely, capricious Missouri.

I fear it was with decided egotism that I told Mr. Manuel—as we always called him—of witnessing the first influence of my countrymen on the sleepy town when they began building houses of brick, whereas the founders had been content with frame structures, daubed with mud and whitewashed, or of undressed stone coated with mortar. Mr. Manuel heard me in silence—He spoke both French and English very poorly, and it was not until I acquired a knowledge of Spanish that I got close to the thoughts of the man. Possibly he was amused at my egotism, or he may have mistaken it for enthusiasm; anyway he signed me as an *engagé* for the 1807 trip up the river, the year he reached the mouth of the Bighorn and helped along the enmity of the Blackfeet against all Americans by building his trading-post in the heart of the land occupied by their hereditary foes, the Crows.

This animosity on the part of the Blackfeet had its inception when Captain Lewis shot and killed one of their men caught in the act of pilfering. That rifle-bullet and Mr. Manuel's first post took a heavy toll of American lives for many years.

For forty years Spain had been supreme in upper Louisiana, and yet she gave but one real trader to the fur trade—Mr. Manuel. But he stood above all others on the Missouri and was to hold his prestige until his death. He was among the first to understand the importance of the information brought back by Lewis and Clark; and the seeking of peltries in the upper-Missouri country as an organized commercial enterprise had its beginning the season we made the Bighorn.

My employer was the founder and essence of the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company and the most indefatigable man who ever took a keelboat of merchandise into that practically unknown land. I was with him in 1809, when he delivered Big White, the Mandan chief, who had returned with Lewis and Clark, to his village near the mouth of Knife River. We ran the gantlet of the Sioux and the Arikaras but completed the business. The United States Government had tried to send its red guest home and had failed, and the Missouri Fur Company—Mr. Manuel—was paid seven thousand dollars for doing what the Government had been unable to do. It was on the return from that trip that I was promoted to clerk, ranking next to Mr. Manuel, the *bourgeois*, in authority and accepted as his equal socially.

We were up-country again in 1810 when he entrusted to me several trading ventures to distant villages. I was fortunate enough to acquit myself creditably on these side trips and was given even more important tasks.

On the fourth trip, that of 1811, when we made such tremendous efforts to catch up with Wilson Price Hunt and his band of Astorians, he wrote me down on the rolls as "Mandan" Ramsay. So it is not boastful of me to assure those far removed in point of time from those pivotal years that I was thereby acknowledged to be something of an authority on the customs and languages of the various tribes. It was to such a colorful background I turned when I left the heat and dust of Washington to carry the war news to the Mississippi.

The town was seething with political discussions wherever Americans gathered to drink, dispute and fight. Federalists and Republicans were quick to announce their bias and to uphold their views in ferocious combats.

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Over those who loved peace and ease hung the fear of a red invasion, of vast hordes sweeping down the Missouri and across from St. Charles to St. Louis itself. Rumors were thick of Indian outrages being committed around Fort Osage and along the Gasconade. Avoiding the brawls and refusing to be drawn into any arguments, I looked up General Clark, the Missouri Company's agent in St. Louis, and was given audience at once.

After his cordial greeting I said—

"The news got here ahead of me."

"We heard it yesterday, and those tavern fools are still fighting and squabbling over going to war or staying out. They don't seem to understand that the decision has been made."

He began pacing the floor, scowling and saying nothing for a minute. Then he suddenly halted and asked—

"What are you thinking of?"

"Of Mr. Manuel."

"I knew it! Lisa and his men have been gone two months. If not already dead they will be trapped once the news is carried to the Sioux from Canada. He *must* get the news ahead of the tribes, or he'll be caught off his guard."

"The tribes can't get the word until it's taken down to them from Canada."

"Or by some one going up the river."

"They would tell Mr. Manuel first."

He smiled grimly and disturbed me by replying:

"Not necessarily. We have all kinds and sorts of people here in St. Louis. There are those who would be glad to do the country a bad turn. Will you carry the news to Lisa?"

When I refused to make the fifth trip with Mr. Manuel and went back East I expected to settle down, and I had believed I was weary of river travel and its continuous procession of surprizes and dangers. But the wrangling of the politicians and the crowded conditions of the Eastern towns had made me forget many of the things I had been complaining about.

But more than all that was my affection for Mr. Manuel. He had been a good friend, a *patron*. Duty and decency alone would have sent me after him under the circumstances.

"I'll start as soon as you can arrange for a boat and I can get a crew," I told General Clark.

"What I expected you'd say. You'll be the first up the river. It'll be a race between you and the messengers sent down from Canada. There's a boat at St. Charles now, and the *patron*,* Lachapel—stanch man—is waiting for orders. I will help you with the crew."

"No Canadian creoles," I stipulated.

"It's hard to tell them from the New Orleans creoles. But you'll have no trouble if some do get mixed in. They're not fighters. Your hunters will be Americans."

"Mr. Manuel knew there was danger of war when he started up-river," I hopefully remarked.

"He wrote me a year ago that war-wampum was being carried by British agents along the banks of the Missouri, and that all the nations on the upper river were being urged to join Tecumseh's great confederacy.† With the exception of one or two tribes they're in an ugly mood and keen to get at our throats. Yes; Lisa's eyes have been open all the time. Would that we had been as wide awake!"

"When can I start?"

"As soon as I can send the trade-goods across to St. Charles. I'll have the mules loaded at once. Lisa would never forgive us if we took an empty boat to him. Come back this afternoon and I'll have ready a list of men who are now in town. You can look them up and reject any you don't fancy."

I COULD accomplish nothing of account until he had made out the list of names, and to kill time I wandered along the river-front and observed the boats tied up. A few craft, busy with local cargoes, were arriving and setting forth; but it was plain that the volume of trade with the Atlantic ports, by the way of New Orleans, was already greatly reduced. As yet the enemy had not had time to blockade the mouth of the Mississippi; but capital is ever timid and was now going into hiding.

It was a sad sight to a river man; and, depressed by the blight already killing off commerce, I wandered three miles from town to a small grove, where La Petite Rivière, or Mill Creek, had its source. This was an excellent spot for one who would be alone and speculate on the fate of the country.

*Sailing-master. †A fact.

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And God knows it all looked black enough with the Federalists denouncing the war and calling down curses on "bloody" Napoleon, while the Republicans harked back thirty-seven years to heap higher their fires of hate against England. Truth was, as I saw it, both nations had treated us very contemptuously, and I only regretted that we were not strong enough to call both of them to book. From whatever angle one looked at the situation it was a sad kettle of fish.

I rejoiced that I had some work ahead to keep my thoughts busy and away from matters I could not mend. Some of too peaceful dispositions were bewailing our going to war with any country, let the provocation be ever so strong. This class could not seem to realize that war was upon us and that we were committed to do battle as did little David in the valley of Elah.

Yet I feared for the outcome, and as I sat by the source of the tiny creek and smoked my pipe and brooded over our insignificant Army and puny Navy I could not oust the thought that very likely we were in for a severe drubbing. Should the Missouri tribes join in with Tecumseh's warriors we were surely whipped in the western country.

I entertained no false notions as to how the Indians stood. They preferred British traders and British goods. The reasons were easily perceived. The Hudson's Bay Company men were among the upper-Missouri tribes before the Indians became acquainted with the Americans.

Our Government's entrance into the fur trade, while impelled only by the wholesome desire to do justice to the red man, had lessened the individual trader's influence. The Government factories, with the exception of Fort Osage, forty miles below the mouth of the Kansas, were all east of the Mississippi. Goods were sold at cost, but no credits were allowed; and no rum.

That the Government's scheme was sound had it been carried out wholeheartedly, was shown by the fact its system was self-sustaining. But a sad error was made when individuals were licensed to trade, thus bringing them into competition with the Government; and the private trader would use rum, giving the individual a decided advantage over the Government.

This combination of individuals and Government factories threw the whole enterprise into confusion. The great bulk of all trade goods was imported from England, and the Indian knew the superiority of English blankets and cloth over the American-made article. After the import duty was paid the British traders had a wide margin of advantage, selling the same article at a price much less than the American could accept.

Some seventeen years after the day I smoked my pipe in that little grove John Jacob Astor was to complain that the English traders could land goods in Canada sixty per cent. more cheaply than he could bring them to the United States; and that they could even undersell American traders in the city of New York, inasmuch as their furs were admitted duty free by us while any we exported to Canada cost us a duty of fifteen per cent. I have always believed that it might have been better for the Indians and the trader if the American Fur Company had been granted a monopoly, thereby being permitted to practise the best features of the Hudson's Bay Company's policy and the best of our Government-factory system. But we were too democratic to permit any monopoly, and so the fur business was anybody's game, hazardous and dangerous, attracting the vicious and irresponsible in the early days while frightening capital. It all resulted in Mr. Manuel being the only trader to gain firm footing on the upper Missouri, a supremacy he enjoyed until he died.

"WILL *m'sieur* pardon?" broke in a wheedling voice.

I jerked up my head and beheld a grotesque figure bowing before me. His creole love of finery was shown in the tawdry bits of ribbon decorating his light blue cotton shirt and in the soiled red ribbon worn in a band around his shaggy black hair. He had no hunting-shirt, and his sandy legs were bare where his breeches ended. He was not prepossessing.

"What do you want?"

With another sweeping bow he whined—

"I lose my friend, the man from Balise."

"You have done well to lose him if he comes from that plague-spot," I told him; for I was recalling some of the wicked tales I heard of Balise, a hundred miles below New Orleans. "Who are you?"

It was not material who he was in name,

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for there was no mistaking his type, that of a river rat; one of those who would shove a knife between a man's ribs for a very small piece of money. He straightened and with a semblance of pride responded:

"I am called Le Fou. *Voyageur.*"

"The Fool," I repeated, smiling at his complacency. "*Mangeur de lard?*"*

"No! No! *Hivernans*,"† he haughtily corrected. Then he grinned like an imbecile and in a nasal tone began singing a favorite river song—

"*Le fils du roi s'en va chassant*——"‡

"Enough. I know nothing of your friend, not even his name," I interrupted.

"He is called the man from Balise," he eagerly informed me. "He is my great friend. Very brave. I seek him, *m'sieur.*"

"This is a poor place to look for him. Go to town. You'll probably find him there."

And I refilled my pipe and picked up the line of thought he had intruded upon. He fumbled with his long locks and hesitated for a few moments, but as I gave him no further heed he finally stole away, moving slyly, much as if he were stalking small game. After finishing my speculations, which led me nowhere, I strolled back to the fort and tower and down la Rue de la Tour to the river.

That afternoon I called again on General Clark and found he had lost no time in arranging for my departure.

"Immediately after you left me this morning," he said, "I sent a messenger to St. Charles with written instructions for Lachapel to have the boat in readiness to receive the cargo. The mules are already on the way with strouding, lead, tobacco, knives, guns and beads. The cargo will be in the box by the time you drag the rascals away from the drink and get them on the road. Lachapel has his orders to consider you as the *bourgeois* and to strain every effort to take you to Mr. Lisa with the least possible delay.

"Here is a list of thirty boatmen, all of whom are now in town. I would advise you to pick twenty of the most likely. Here are the names of five American hunters, who are drunk about the streets somewhere. All good men.

"I do hope you can steal through without being held up. It will be Autumn before you arrive, and that is the favorite time for the Indians to visit the river. The last part of your journey will be doubly dangerous. I shall be very uneasy until word can be brought back of your safe arrival and the situation Mr. Lisa finds himself in.

"Now you'd better be after the men. The hunters will cause you more trouble than the twenty *voyageurs.*"

All this before I had had time to open my mouth.

I thanked him, pocketed the lists and departed. Then began a round of drinking-places, with invitations to sing, talk politics and fight in almost every place.

The list of boatmen consisted entirely of creoles, many of whom I knew. Four-fifths of our common employees in the river trade were creoles from Canada or lower Louisiana. As a rule they were illiterate and made their marks when signing away their freedom. They possessed what the Americans lacked, however—good-nature, light-heartedness, willingness, cheerful endurance under great hardships, contentment with poor food. These were the qualities that endeared them to Mr. Astor above the Americans.

In all that pertained to working a boat up the big river they were incomparable. In a fight one of our riflemen was worth a whole boatload of them. They also were as picturesque as they were light-hearted.

One could not ask for better hands in working a twenty-ton keelboat through treacherous water. No hardihood nor daring daunted them. But let a band of wandering Indians appear on the bluff and wave blankets and fire their trade guns, and they were useless.

The five Americans on my list could be used as scouts, as messengers through desperate country, or as riflemen in repelling an attack. They were less agreeable to get along with than the creoles because of their independent spirit. Yet they were the lads who brought in the game from under the noses of a war-party. The creoles' usefulness was confined to the boat. If ever an outfit was sent overland it would be because of the native-born riflemen.

It was not difficult to locate the boatmen, as they loved to drink in company, and their presence in any wine-shop was heralded far by their river songs. Already the war was

*Pork-eaters. Applied to common laborers brought in from Canada and bound for five years at very low wage. Equivalent to "greenhorn."

†A Winterer.

‡"The prince to chase them he did run."

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presaging hard times for them, and all I approached were willing enough for the venture, although some insisted on finishing their spree. They greeted me with great good humor and much vivacity.

The Americans, just as keen for the business as were the creoles, growled and grumbled. I bruskly ordered the boatmen to make for St. Charles at once or be left behind; and, singing and joking, they obeyed.

It was necessary to use different tactics with the hunters. I cajoled them by reminding them that there was rum at St. Charles; and by one ruse after another I finally started them for the little village on the Missouri.

My troubles were far from ended, however, for my countrymen likened themselves to the golden eagle in independence, and profanely declared their intention of having several days' fling along the one straggling street of the village.

Disgusted, but used to such delays, I sought Michael Lachapel, silent and trustworthy, and Leme, the *bosseman* (assistant sailing-master) and explained the great need of haste. Lachapel, as *patron* for Mr. Manuel on several trips, had been through the experience of getting the men clear of St. Charles before; and he advised that we cast off and proceed up the river a bit and go into camp. This would take the boatmen away from the drink and have them fit for their hard work once we had reclaimed our hunters.

The *patron* seemed more concerned over our lack of a swivel in the bow than he did in getting started. In the tiny cabin, however, were two brass blunderbusses which would do about as much damage as a swivel.

With a sibilant volley of expletives he soon had the *voyageurs* treading the *passe-avant*, as the fifteen-inch walk along each side of the long cargo-box was called, and the boat slipped from under their pushing feet, and the long journey over the winding water road was begun.

The hunters watched our departure with drunken hoots of derision and discharged their rifles carelessly. Some shouted after us much earnest prophecy as to our uncomfortable lot in the future life. As we rounded the first bend they turned away and swaggered back to a groggery.

Lachapel, perched high in the stern at the steering-oar, ordered the poles to be exchanged for oars, six to a side, and started the favorite of the creole river songs, singing the first line and the men giving back the next in chorus:

PATRON: Derrière chez nous, il y a un étang—
CREW: Ye, ye ment!—
PATRON: Trois canards s'en vont baignans,
CREW: Tous du long de la rivière,
PATRON: Legèrement ma bergère,
*CREW: Legèrement—ye ment!"**

After we had rounded the second bend Lachapel left it to the *bosseman* to conduct the singing and motioned for me to join him. When I stood beside him he complained:

"Head of a fish! What good is he, *m'sieur bourgeois?* Either at the pole, the oar, or on the cordelle?"

I stared blankly, and he nodded to starboard and muttered:

"Number three. Where did you pick him up?"

Then I saw him, the grimacing tatterdemalion who had accosted me in the little grove at the head of Le Petite Rivière. I ran my glance over the others. There was an even twenty; and the eccentric certainty had not been hired by me. Lachapel read my thoughts and whispered:

"Baptiste Leclair dropped out somewhere. The men tell me he made the village. Undoubtedly he is with the hunters. If *m'sieur bourgeois* had asked me before hiring——"

His professional pride was hurt. I interrupted him by calling out:

"You man there at number three oar, who calls himself Le Fou. Come here!"

This was not river etiquette, as the sailing-master should have given the order. Lachapel pursed his lips slightly in concealing his displeasure. The singing instantly ceased, and the men all stared at Le Fou and then at me.

Nor did I find anything except secret disapproval in their furtive glances; for it was a great insult to a boatman to be called to account by name when at work with pole, oar, or the long towing-line. To be cursed out collectively was the accepted custom; they always expected it. Anonymous abuse only stimulated them. But

*Behind our house there is a pond—
Fal, lal de lal—
There came three ducks to swim thereon,
All along the river clear,
Lightly, my shepherdess dear,
Lightly, fal de ra.

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to select an individual by name was an entirely different matter.

Le Fou slowly relinquished his oar and came to the stern. To Lachapel I explained:

"He is known as Le Fou. He nearly dropped his oar overboard when I spoke to him. He was not on my list, and has no business here. Put him ashore."

Le Fou began howling and protesting in a blur of appeals. The *patron*, still disgruntled that I should interfere with the crew, replied:

"We shall be short-handed with Leclair gone. I marveled that *m'sieur bourgeois* should engage this man, but now he is here let him work his passage. I can get some work out of him on the boat, and when we cordelle the men will see he pulls his bigness on the line or be snapped into the river to drown."

At the least we needed twenty men even if we knew none would be lost during the long journey up the river. Until the hunters came I was the only one of my race aboard. Not knowing how many of the *voyageurs* might be in sympathy with Great Britain, it would pay me ill to arouse the antagonism of a loyal *patron*. And I knew I had been at fault in taking matters out of his hands. So I nodded my head and made amends by saying aloud:

"It is for you to say, M'sieur Lachapel. I spoke, as I have met this fellow before. Of course the handling of the boat is entirely your concern."

"Noble master, I but seek my protector, the man from Balise!" cried Le Fou to the *patron*. "I am lost without him. Let me continue with you. I will work hard."

To show my lack of interest in the matter I walked forward and stood with Leme, the *bosseman*, in the bow. The business between the interloper and the sailing-master was soon finished; and, cringing and bowing low, the half-wit returned to his oar and labored mightily. Two miles above the village we made fast to the bank, and the crew went ashore and gathered fuel for the kettles. Lachapel and the *bosseman* kept a sharp watch so that none of the men might slip away to visit the village for more rum. We carried tents for the *voyageurs;* but as the weather was clear and our stop would be brief these were not unloaded.

The boatmen were served their supper of mush, with a pound of tallow to each ration, the regular fare; and as several of them succeeded in knocking over small game they dined, for them, right royally. The creoles were ever easy to feed. Where Americans would rebel and perhaps desert, the *voyageurs* would eat the same fare day in and day out and make no complaint.

Their breakfast usually was lyed corn (hulled) and hominy, and their dinner consisted of fat pork and biscuit. Usually the latter item was dispensed with long before the journey was completed as it often spoiled from accidental wettings. Yet on this simple fare, even when not varied by game, the creoles would thrive and be ever ready to carry the long cordelle* all day long, waist-deep in icy water, or fighting through blinding clouds of mosquitoes. In short, they seemed insensible to the arduous features of their disagreeable toil.

It should not be supposed from this, however, that they could not enjoy more appetizing meals and eat largely when the chance was given. It was often said that any two of them could eat the whole side of a buffalo at one sitting. While I never witnessed that feat, I will say that few Indians could devour more meat than could our creoles.

After supper the *bosseman* brought one of our two cats from the cargo-box and gave her the run of the shore. Very soon she began bringing wood-mice to her half-grown kittens and even provided for old Tom, her mate. The men with the volatile enthusiasm of children huzzaed and marveled, and praised the tabby each time she proudly jumped aboard with her kill.

After his first trip Mr. Manuel never went up the river without taking several cats along; for we quickly learned that in the fur country one puss is of more value than a sound horse. The company lost several thousand dollars' worth of trade goods at their Minnetaree post from mice in one season because the Indians stole all the cats. The mother cat would average from four to ten mice a night from the time we left St. Charles. The tom cat had to be kept a close prisoner *en route*, as no affection for his children would call him back from his hunting.

LASHED by the fear that the upper tribes would learn the news from Canada before I could reach Mr. Manuel, but helpless to proceed without

*Tow-line.

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the hunters, I passed the next day in a miserable state of mind. To prevent the *voyageurs* from suspecting my disquietude or from thinking I was overindulgent toward the recalcitrants, Lachapel and I pretended to have discovered a weakness in our mast and sent the men hunting for oak timber.

Mr. Manuel, who had followed the sea, had taught us how to rig a sail and topsail, which always were of inestimable value, especially after quitting the wooded country and entering upon the open upper river above the Platte. The long towing-line was made fast to the top of the mast and passed through a ring, which was secured by a short length of line to the bow. This arrangement permitted the cordelle to clear the overhanging bushes and small trees when the men were strung out along the shore and pulling against the stiff current.

That night I listened for the sound of the hunters coming up the bank, but not a man showed up. In the morning Le Fou completed my irritation by approaching me just as the men were finishing breakfast and with a ludicrous bow asking when we were to proceed.

Lachapel endeavored to freeze him with an icy stare; but the fellow was not called Fool for nothing. It was obvious he had worked on the river; but it was equally plain that he had never sailed with Mr. Manuel. Perhaps his experience had been confined to a short run to the Kansas villages on the river of that name. For had he ever traveled with any outfit besides a haphazard one even his shallow wits would have learned the gulf existing between a *voyageur* and a *bourgeois*. Sure enough the fur trade—for many years to be the only business west of the Mississippi—was at its beginning; yet already the law of caste was operating. An *engagé* would never dream of directly accosting the *bourgeois* unless first addressed. Discipline depended upon stifling all familiarity; life depended on discipline. And I lived to see the *bourgeois* wear a uniform so that even strangers visiting a post might recognize him as the absolute commander and conduct themselves accordingly.

Regardless of black looks and the *patron's* frozen gaze, Le Fou crowded forward, and as I failed to heed his first query persisted:

"A thousand pardons of my great friend. But when do we go on? I am looking for the man from Balise. If we wait much longer we shall not find him."

"Insolent dog!" roared Lachapel, the deeps of his wrath boiling over the more furiously as he had insisted on retaining the fellow. "Do you want to be towed astern for the catfish to nibble? How dare you open your vile mouth to *m'sieur* the *bourgeois?* You men there, take sticks and whip this fellow into better manners!"

That seemed needless cruelty and a poor way of inculcating deportment in a half-wit. Also, I owed the sailing-master one for his taking umbrage when I had urged that the fellow be put ashore. I saved him from a whipping by saying:

"If he did not do as he does he would not be called Le Fou. Once we get under way you will keep him too busy, *m'sieur* the *patron*, for him to forget again."

Lachapel countermanded his order and allowed the fellow to escape with nothing more severe than a detailed revelation as to his family tree. The *patron* and I retired to the stern of the boat to smoke our pipes apart from the crew; and Lachapel—a bit maliciously, I suspect—inquired:

"But may I ask, *m'sieur*, just when do we proceed? If we stay here much longer it would be well to hunt for hickory for extra ax-handles and ramrods. Burn my head! But I was forgetting. The hunters are not here, and we shall not need extra ramrods until they come."

I bit the stem of my pipe savagely and growled—

"The hunters will be here very soon."

"Today?" he innocently asked.

"Today," I recklessly replied.

Perhaps I meant this to be taken as a bit of optimism, something in the nature of a pleasant forecast, a wish; but Lachapel shrewdly seized upon it as a promise and exclaimed so all on the bank might hear:

"*M'sieur* is so masterful! He will teach the wild Americans it is unwise to delay him. He says he will have them in camp before sunset."

Thus was I committed, all because of Le Fou's intrusion, to bringing the five hunters into camp willy nilly. I must bring them in or lose prestige with the crew. Rough life and I were old acquaintances, and, being fortunate in bone and muscle and a certain amount of cunning, I never feared a brawl.

But it was preposterous for one man to

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attack the carousing quintet back in St. Charles and make them do his will. The hunters feared neither man nor devil. Five grizzly bears would be as easy to handle. Yet I must make the attempt now Lachapel had announced as much.

As brooding over it helped me none and served only to magnify the task, I leaped ashore and bruskly informed the *patron* we would start up the river as soon as I returned from St. Charles. The *voyageurs* gave me a loud cheer as I made down the river path, Le Fou's cracked voice ringing out above all the others. There was something mocking in their hearty homage. My thoughts became quite murderous against Le Fou as I glanced back and beheld the simpleton dancing excitedly and yelling to split his throat.

The two miles—a bit less by the shore trail—were covered all too quickly. The long street of the village was practically deserted, and I assumed the hunters were sleeping off the night's debauch until a roaring of voices assailed my ears.

At first it sounded like so many wild animals making a meaningless outcry. But as I advanced farther down the middle of the empty street the rough cadence of the ferocious *Les Chevelures** was to be recognized. The singing, if one may call it that, came from a one-story structure devoted to a whisky trade with up-river bound outfits,* while being the first carousing-place for those completing the down-river voyage.

In all my trips with Mr. Manuel I do not recall that we ever cleared St. Charles without being delayed for two or more days, waiting for some of the crew to finish their drinking. This evil practise formed a vicious circle. The men would drink so long as the tavernkeeper would supply liquor on credit. The proprietor of the trap would charge the whole score up to the *bourgeois;* and when the score was large enough, and the *bourgeois* had paid—he always did pay for the sake of getting his men back to the boat—then the supply of whisky would be shut off, and the quarrelsome, drunken outfit would report for duty.

But the hunters were only five in number; and no matter how great had been their capacity their lusty rendering of the hideous scalp-song told me, as it was telling the proprietor, that they were capable of consuming many more quarts. One of them, Richardson, a giant of a man, often boasted he could drink a gallon in twenty-four hours and still whip any man on the river. I am inclined to believe he exaggerated none.

So mine was not the simple remedy of calling for the score and paying it. Had I permitted the twenty creoles to tarry, the proprietor would have been more complaisant; as it was he would seek to make up the lost trade from the Americans.

Not knowing how I was to proceed, I stopped at an open window and looked in. The proprietor, a fat squab of a man, was seated on a high stool behind the bar, half-asleep from weariness. Sprawled out in front of the bar in basket chairs were my hunters, men who had faced death so many times and in so many forms, and who were so inured to tragic climaxes that even the debaucheries of the river towns could not keep them out of the dangerous country very long at a time.

They had been fighting among themselves in the rough-and-tumble border fashion, and there was not a face that was not bruised or battered. Their quarreling had not resulted from any animosity but from a sheer love for physical combat.

Richardson, the big fellow, had been bitten or cut in the hand, as a blood-soaked rag around that member evidenced. As I stared through the window he was in the act of pouring raw whisky inside the bandage.

Beside him—perhaps the inflicter of the wound—was Lang, short and stubby of build. His face was beaten to a pulp. Yet he was happy and his lungs were as strong as any as he shouted the terrible *Les Chevelures.* Long and Belter could not resist adding pantomime to their vocal efforts; for, springing to their feet, they circled around James, the fifth man, dancing with the grotesque posturing of a Dakota, stamping their heels so as to produce a thudding sound. Probably every man of them had more than once witnessed the scalp-dance in some Dakota village with an Arikara or a Mandan as the victim.

At this new note of smacking feet the proprietor jerked up his head, took in the situation and relaxed. To make the pantomime more realistic Long seized James

*The Scalps. So called by the creoles. Song accompanying scalp-dance of the Dakotas.
*Brigade was the Canadian term.

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by his long hair and brandished a butcher-knife and let out a terrific yell. Richardson and Lang, who had nodded approvingly at the spectacle, could not withstand an impulse to participate; and the circle was enlarged as they took the floor, pranc̈ing and yowling, bending far forward in an ecstasy of enjoyment, or throwing back their shaggy heads until they saw only the smoke-stained ceiling.

James took the rough play in good part, although the twisting and tugging of his hair as each man attempted to get a handful must have been rather annoying. But at last he rebelled, and with a whoop came to his feet, brandishing his knife and hatchet when Richardson pawed together some floor clutter under the stool and attempted to ignite it by discharging his pistol. The proprietor, now thoroughly awake, squawked in terror for fear his place be burned or one of his customers be killed. It was at this juncture that I stepped through the doorway.

The dancers ceased their antics and greeted me with boisterous enthusiasm. Richardson had known me since I first went up the river as an *engagé*. All of them were too independent to follow the deportment of the *voyageurs*. Lang hurled a heavy mug at the proprietor's head to teach him better manners than to remain seated when the *bourgeois* appeared. Ignoring them entirely, I stepped to the bar and told the rat-eyed proprietor—

"These men are to have no more liquor on credit."

"Who'n —— be you to come here and be saying when honest, hard-working men shall quit their fun?" he insolently demanded.

The five scamps lined up behind me, grinning broadly. It would have been difficult for an Eastern man to tell them from Indians had it not been for their beards. Each wore a gay handkerchief around the head as a turban and long deerskin leggings that left the thighs and hips bare. Where the flesh showed it was as dark as any red man's. Their hunting-shirts were broad of cape and loose of sleeve and lapped a foot over the chest to provide a pouch for emergency provisions and "possibles."* And never were savages more fond of fringe and beadwork and ornaments of hair and feathers than were these first white men to penetrate to the forks of the Missouri.

Their grinning regard for me was a challenge. They would not join the boat so long as the rum was pushed across the bar. And they believed I was unable to cut off the supply until the proprietor was satisfied with his profits.

"These men are to have no more liquor on credit," I repeated as the fellow waited for me to speak.

"They'll have it, mister, till I take the notion they've had enough," he retorted. "Reckon, mister, you'd better come round 'bout tomorrer afternoon, and mebbe I'll let you settle."

I met this insolence by stating—

"What you already have marked up against them will be paid by them, or not paid at all."

"By ——! No *bourgeois* ever refused to settle," he snarled.

"This *bourgeois* does."

"You! *Bourgeois?*"

The idea impressed him as being very humorous; and he laughed and closed his ratty eyes. Still laughing, he began pushing bottles across the bar in an invitation for the hunters to drink. In a paroxysm of rage I picked him up, swept the bar clean, and slammed him against the wall.

"Laughing at me, dog?" I asked him.

With a stentorian roar Richardson propelled himself forward by pulling two of his companions violently backward.

"The —— hound! He dast laugh at a river man, and Mandan Ramsay at that! I'll have a ear! I will have a ear!"

And with another wild howl he yanked out his knife and made a slash over my shoulder at the frightened wretch.

"Dance him! Dance him!" screamed Lang; and he set them all off by beginning *Les Chevelures*.

I pushed Richardson back among his friends and repeated my question to the scoundrel. The hunters were insisting on scalping him in addition to taking his ears, and as a preliminary began prancing around in a small circle, chopping at the bar with their hatchets on each revolution, and singing their infernal song.

The fellow was thoroughly frightened.

"For God's sake let me go," he begged. "We'll call it quits at the score as she stands. Let me git back of the bar. I

*Early Western border for small personal effects. "Fixings" of latter days.

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have the figgers there. I've kept an honest reckoning."

"You'll always keep it," I assured him; and, picking him up, I tossed him over the bar, where he was out of reach of the hunters' drunken play.

Breaking through the circle of dancers, I announced:

"I pay for no liquor trade. You can pay or owe; but not a penny of Mr. Manuel's money on this trip. The boat is two miles above here on this side of the river. We start as soon as I get back. Do you go with me or stay here where you can get no credit?"

"Now, Mandan, don't ride a high hoss to death," advised Richardson.

It was impossible to induce the externals of respect from them.

"Just one more snort to limber up our legs," suggested Lang. "I ain't no hawg. I'll even put it this way: As much as I can swaller while you're counting ten. Then we'll light a peace pipe and see about going with you. The old river ain't going to dry up this season."

"Take all the time you want; but you'll be too late if you're not at the boat when I reach it," I warned.

"Now, Mandan, you don't want to make us think you've got the heart of a Blackfoot," begged Richardson. "Just try and be as pleasant as at least a Teton Sioux would be to a Osage."

"Lucky our credit's good for one more drink," James optimistically announced as he lounged up to the bar.

"Trade's closed," muttered the proprietor. "You fellers have cost me a pretty pen as it is. And you sp'iled the front of my bar."

They would have dragged him from behind the bar had I not warned them:

"You owe this man money. It's a short cry to St. Louis. If it's said there that you did him bodily mischief you'll buy no more whisky even if you have the price of a pack of beaver in your pockets. Who's for the upper Missouri? General Clark gave me your names. He has an Injun memory."

I started for the door, wondering if I had won or lost. Richardson snarled after me—

"You're in a —— of a hustle, Mandan Ramsay."

They had made no move to get their rifles from the corner as I wheeled to answer Richardson.

"There is need of hurry," I told him. "The United States and Great Britain are at war. Manuel Lisa, who is somewhere above the Arikara villages, doesn't know war has been declared. You know how quick the British traders will carry the word to the Arikaras, the Sioux and the Minnetarees. You know what influence the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Company have over the upper tribes. You can imagine what will happen to Mr. Manuel and his men if he is taken by surprize. The song you're so fond of singing will be sung around him.

"But you fellows stay here, and if you can get more whisky fill up and let Mr. Manuel and the whole fur country go to —— and the Canadians' companies. What does it matter so long as you can keep your skins full of liquor? And when Mr. Manuel is wiped out and the tribes swarm down the river to bring the fighting to the back doors of St. Louis, you fellows won't be in any danger, because you can move down the Mississippi and perhaps find more rum. And after it's all finished and you really have to go to work, then bare your heads like the pork-eaters and crawl to the British factories and hire out at pork-eaters' pay."

I couldn't think of anything more to tell them. As I walked from the room I feared I had failed. I would not look around, and I could not discover with my ears that they had left the groggery. But when I had walked some fifty yards up the river bank Richardson's heavy breath came over my shoulder as he mildly inquired—

"How's the old cat taking care of her kittens?"

"Eight mice last night," I answered without looking back.

I had forgotten that, drunk or sober, the rascals could outfoot an Indian when it came to walking softly.

"You oughter let us stayed till we catched the feller who done for poor Leclair," sighed Richardson.

Now I did turn my head, shocked at the intimation some evil had befallen Baptiste Leclair, the missing *voyageur*.

"They picked him up back among the trees, knifed through the heart," continued Richardson before I could put a question.

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"When we finish this trip we fellers are going to clean out that nest. He ain't the first river man that's been sent among ghosts while stopping for a mild snort of liquor at St. Charles."

I was sorry for Leclair. He was a good boatman. However, we usually lost one or two men from accident or violence before we could get well under way. But I did not believe thoroughly in Richardson's theory that some of the river scum hanging about St. Charles had murdered him. When attaining a certain state of drunkenness the average *voyageur* could use a knife as quickly as our old cat could pounce on a mouse.

And so it happened that long before the noon hour I entered the camp with five ill-tempered hunters trailing their rifles in single file behind me. The *patron* stared very hard at me for a few seconds, then slightly bowed his head in recognition of my accomplishment. He gave the word, and the *voyageurs* took positions on the *passe-avant*, the knobs of the long poles under their shoulders. The hunters, thirsty for more drink and yearning for a look or a word on which they could hang a quarrel, leaped on board and threw themselves down on the twelve feet of deck at each end of the cargo box and promptly went to sleep.

The current was strong, and we grounded twice. We made only six miles before we had to camp because of the darkness. A tardy beginning for one who would make haste to inform the upper Missouri that the world was on fire again.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN FROM BALISE

NEXT morning fortune smiled on us as we had a southeast breeze and a clear road. We sailed until midday, when we were obliged to use the cordelle in passing an island.

It was in this kind of work that the creole appeared at his best. Twenty of them were on the long line, some in the water to their armpits and some scrambling along the shore, and all pulling their bigness and with sharp yelps of encouragement to each other hauling the boat through the strong current.

Le Fou, who was in the water, sagged down on the line and was promptly snapped off his feet. As he attempted to keep his head above water by clinging to the line it was slackened and he disappeared. After that he was careful to give no offense and, so far as I could observe, did his work to the best of his ability.

For several days only the usual incidents of an up-river trip occupied our attention. Deer tracks were plenty in the shoals, passing from bar to bar. Along the shores were scaffolds at every few miles. The settlers mounted these on moonlight nights and shot the deer when the mosquitoes drove them from the woods to the river.

Although we were not yet outside of civilization some of the creoles began to show signs of homesickness, but although the men camped on shore we had small fear of any of them deserting. In truth, it was the American hunters who were inclined to quit an outfit regardless of their engagements. I hasten to add that such desertions were not prompted by homesickness or fear, but because of their unwillingness to submit to discipline.

However, we lost neither hunter nor *voyageur* during those early stages. The creoles found solace in their frivolous songs, and the hunters were kept busy ranging the shores for deer, bear and turkey.

The bluffs vanished from the northeast side and appeared in the southwest just before we reached Tavern Rocks, as a cave in the two-hundred-foot cliff was called. While the men were eating a late dinner I climbed to this spot which was held in considerable awe by the Indians, and inspected the crude drawings of birds and beasts scratched on the walls. All Indians I ever questioned about the pictographs disclaimed any knowledge of the artists, but said they had been there when their fathers' fathers were children. That the drawings were not haphazard efforts of expression was proven by the ease with which red companions on former visits would read the story contained in each picture.

Above the Tavern we made excellent time through the "long reach," although part of one day was lost because of a tremendous rainstorm that blurred the vision and made even poling and rowing unsafe. The day of the storm forced us to land at a very dangerous spot, where many trees had recently fallen into the river,

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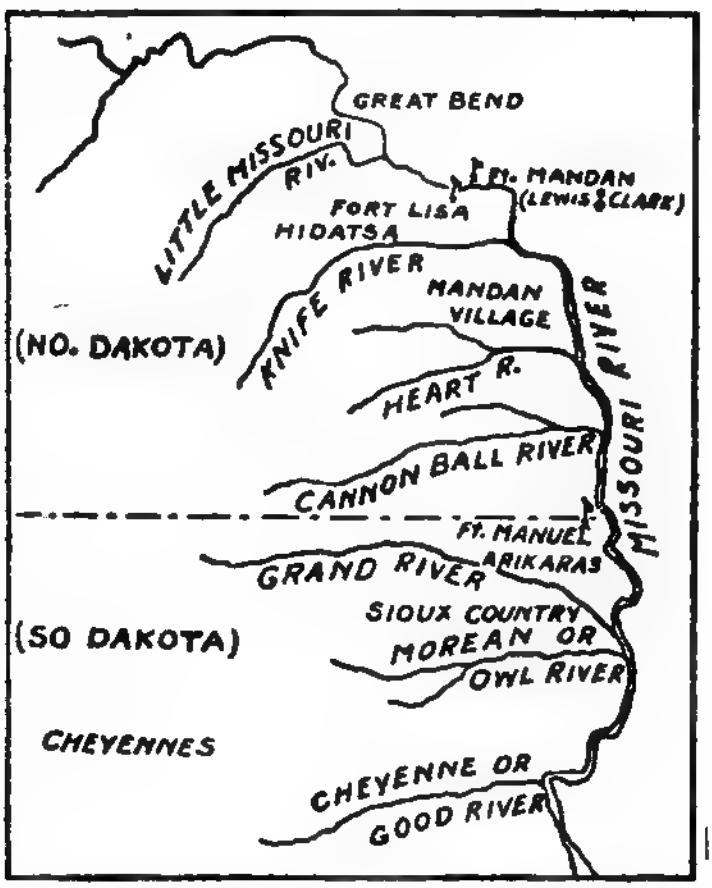
while more of the weakly rooted might fall on us at any minute.

One cottonwood, close to the edge of the bank, measured three feet in diameter; and had that let go its hold it would have crushed our boat into splinters. When



UPPER MISSOURI IN 1812, SHOWING PRESENT STATE BOUNDARY

the tempest abated so we could view our surroundings the *patron* moved up-stream a mile to a more favorable locality.

We passed Boone's settlement, made by him and his two sons, Nathaniel and Daniel, on land granted the great pioneer by the Spanish governor, Don Trudeau, in 1795. The river narrows below Point Labadie, and in passing between an island and the shore to avoid the swift current we found the upper end plugged by logs and drift and lost two hours in getting the boat through. I mention these incidents to show something of the daily annoyances during the most momentous journey I ever took in all my years on the river.

On the head of the island stood a log house and a bit of cleared land. Here lived a family of eight. They had nothing to sell and nothing to buy with. To the eastern observation they were thoroughly destitute. Yet they had lived there a year and had nothing to complain of. A few vegetables and plenty of game furnished them a living, but the head of the family probably did not see two dollars in money from one year's end to another. During the Revolutionary War this was the farthermost point on the Missouri visited by Americans. Now numerous cabins were scattered through the bottoms on both sides of the river.

I gradually became conscious of missing something that had held my attention on all former journeys up the river. I was missing the spectacle of drowned buffalo floating among the drift after breaking through the ice up the river. Heretofore I always had covered this section of the river early in the Spring, when the water was high and sweeping the huge carcasses down even to the waterfront of St. Louis.

One interesting incident occurred while we laid up for an hour at the little village of Charette on the northeast side. Lewis and Clark had found seven log houses and as many families there, the last settlement of whites on the Missouri. Now there were thirty families. Each cabin had its patch of corn, but the settlers' main living was the game the hunters brought in. They could have planted more corn had they been farmers instead of hunters.

They had not even provided for their horses, for the sorry-looking, half-starved nags had subsisted on the bark of trees during the early Spring, stripping them as far as they could reach. Because of the lack of Winter fodder hundreds of elm, cottonwood, nettle and mulberry trees had been spoiled.

But what focused my attention and caused me to forget the shiftlessness of the settlers was the erect figure of an old man, who walked down the bank to look at us. I called out to him a greeting, and added the war news. His eyes glinted with interest, and one hand patted the long Kentucky rifle he was nursing in the hollow of his left arm. I inquired his name.

"Dan'l Boone," he told me.

He was seventy-eight years old and recently had returned from his Spring hunt and had brought in sixty beaver. After a bit he talked freely and related some of his experiences after migrating to the Missouri, then held by Spain. He told me his sons were anxious to build a road from St. Charles westward. He was almost inclined to believe it was not necessary so long as travel was by the river, yet he purposed to give them every assistance.

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In later years I was to travel over the Boone's Lick road to Franklin and watch it creep on as far as the junction of the Kansas and the Missouri; and still later, before the town of Franklin, first in importance in the Boone's Lick country, was swallowed by the river, and before Booneville rose on the opposite bank, I was to see this road mark the beginning of the Santa Fé road. And whenever I think of the Spanish trade and the immense proportions it attained I recall that erect figure of Daniel Boone, hunter and lover of the wilds throughout his long life, and yet one whose influence is etched on trade roads from the Carolinas to the Rocky Mountains.

The absence of the Spring rise and the consequent opportunity to observe more closely the natural channel of the river impressed on my mind a lesson I had been slow to learn when banks were overflowed and much of the country was submerged. I refer to the tendency of the shores to cave in where the settler's ax had removed the growth that held the soil in a measure against the ravages of the savage current. Cabins at distant intervals accompanied us on both sides, and invariably the few cleared acres around each log house stretched along the bank, where they were sure to be shaved off by high water.

Could the trees along the river have been left standing the destruction of the shores would have been greatly retarded. But the first settlers were hunters, as their fathers had been in Virginia and Kentucky, and they worried but little over the pranks of the river. Around each humble home were planted Indian corn, pumpkins, potatoes and a few other vegetables, but scarcely more than the family would need through the Winter even when greatly supplemented by game. There seemed to be plenty of pigs and cattle, mostly uncared for and picking up a living as best they could. It was the hunting age along the Missouri; and the men preferred to perch a turkey and shoot a deer or a bear to raising crops; and the women and children unaided did what they could with the vegetable gardens.

We began to encounter one *embarras** after another. Around each we had to cordelle or grapple our way. The latter was heart-breaking work as we must pull ourselves along foot by foot. Where the banks at the bends had fallen in and had hurled the trees far out into the river it was usually too deep for poling, and often it was impossible to conquer the current even a few yards from the shore. We lost precious time in doubling almost every point, and we considered ourselves lucky if the bank was not too steep and we could seize with our hands the overhanging growth of willows and young cottonwood-trees and pull ourselves into gentler water.

A provoking occurrence marked the afternoon we made the mouth of the Gasconade, and all the more annoying because Nature could not be blamed for it. We had scarcely tied up before we were visited by a man in a dugout. He had a barrel of whisky, and some cotton for his wife to spin. He was returning to a Gasconade settlement to set up a tavern, he told me.

His outfit, so far as I could learn, consisted entirely of the whisky. Yet he was very optimistic about making a living. The Gasconade settlers would exchange game and pelts for drink, and thus he would obtain his living and have something to trade down at St. Louis for more whisky and luxuries. It was very simple; and the pity of it was it was feasible. His would be a life of comparative ease, and he would prosper beyond many of his neighbors.

After talking with me a bit he hitched his dugout in the bushes a short distance upstream. While the men were ashore preparing to cook their dinner Lachapel informed me some one had broken into the long cargo box. It seemed incredible that a thief could have found an opportunity for pilfering, but the fact stood established.

We started an investigation and discovered the Gasconade man doing a lively business trade with our men. Already several yards of the company's scarlet cloth and a dozen cheap knives had passed into his hands, and the *voyageurs* and hunters were rapidly approaching the hilarious point. The *patron* and I broke up the trade and recovered the goods.

Le Fou seemed to have charge of the stolen merchandise, but he could not remember who gave it to him. It was better we did not learn the name of the thief, for to punish him might cause trouble, and to discharge him would leave

*Trees matted together in huge rafts. The current rushed around these obstacles with great violence.

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us short-handed. To steal from the company in order to procure whisky was not considered by the river men to constitute larceny.

The log houses and clearings continued with us as far as Loutre (Otter) Island, where we found a considerable settlement. It was three years old, and had been founded by an Englishman, Hale Talbot. I always remember the place, as three years later Captain James Callaway, a grandson of Boone, was ambushed by Indians near the Talbot clearing and killed. For thus did the War of 1812 affect the individual living on the lonely Missouri.

Early on a cloudy morning we passed Montbrunt's Tavern—a large cave in the north bank of the river—and reached a streak of yellowish water along the southwest shore that told us we were nearing the mouth of the Osage. Without hindrance we reached the beautifully located village of Côte sans Dessein, two miles below the Osage, and received the first real thrill of the journey.

We had barely tied up before we were greeted by a mob of men, women and children, all excitedly chattering in French. A war-party of two hundred Iowas, Pottawatomi, and Sioux were taking a fight to the Osage Indians up the river of that name. They had halted outside the village and were still lurking about the outskirts that they might catch and scalp an Osage boy who was hiding in the village. The settlers would not give the boy up and were ready to make a strong fight from their blockhouse fort if openly attacked. Later on the settlers were to have their fill of fighting; but as yet the war-party knew nothing about the declaration of war and were concerned only with securing some Osage hair.

We were further informed that other war bands were out up the river, all bent on intertribal wars but not adverse to killing any small bands of whites they might happen upon. Ordinarily white men were safe when two tribes went to war provided they surrendered food and powder on demand. But did a small band of whites fall in with a defeated war-party, ashamed to return home with nothing to show for its losses, its fate depended on the stubbornness of its resistance.

And would *m'sieur* the *bourgeois* please march his men, all armed, through the village as if he had come to stay? We were glad to do this; and with my riflemen thrown out ahead and on the flanks we paraded in double file, marching to the blockhouse and swinging out toward the woods where the keen eyes of the red scouts could observe our numbers. Many guns were fired by the settlers as if in rejoicing over our arrival, and my men made noise enough for a regiment. Several hours later Lang and Belter returned from a scout with the welcome news that the Indians had departed.

The settlers were much pleased to have escaped a fight, and the hunters were disappointed. That night the settlers gave us a feast, and as considerable rum was passed my Americans were soon in a better frame of mind and gave their scalp-dance and sang their *Les Chevelures*, and quite fascinated the women by their ferocious bearing. By morning the good people were as pleased to see us depart as they had been anxious for us to remain.

When we were passing the Osage Le Fou told about wintering in the Osage villages two hundred miles up the river. It was that experience which had prompted him to style himself a *hivernans*, or Winterer.

NOW we came to handsome prairie openings and a beautiful upland country with clean groves of hickory and ash and oak; and we fed our eyes well, for the timber would diminish as we ascended the river until, beyond Council Bluffs, we should see but little.

I began watching the crew for signs of uneasiness, for on no trip up the river had I known it to fail. They had a superstitious fear of Wizard Island. When they began to lag at the poles or hold back on the cordelle I read their thoughts. They had decided we could not make camp beyond the place, and they wished for darkness to overtake us and force us to the shore before we reached it. But Mr. Manuel was waiting to be told, and Lachapel drove them to the work; and as it would happen we were forced to camp opposite the island.

Where they got the notion the island was haunted, or that a sorcerer of fearful powers dwelt there, I have no idea. I only know I found the legend awaiting me when I made my first voyage up the Missouri.

When questioned none could be found

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who had seen the sorcerer close at hand, but there were many who would take their solemn oath they had seen him at a distance. It seems he always vanished when approached—rather an amiable trait, I thought.

For the men's peace of mind it rained heavily that night, and nothing unusual disturbed our rest. But never were men more willing to make an early start than were my creoles next morning.

We did not break the routine of our journey again until we came in sight of Fort Osage. It was ten o'clock in the morning, and while we were six miles distant, that we first sighted it. It was a most welcome sight after a hundred miles of continuous, dreary woods, with the undergrowth a great obstacle to cordelling, and with much trouble from the "ripples" throughout the last forty miles. "Ripples" is a gentle word and, as applied to the river, a misnomer. They consisted of high sand-bars over which the river dashed with great noise and violence.

When we sighted one of these obstacles the men were set to poling if the water were not too deep, and we approached the barricade at our best speed. Then would follow several minutes of boiling confusion, with the men yelling and bending double on the *passe-avants*. Sometimes the boat would be balanced on the top of the bar and after prodigious effort would be poled over and the fight would be renewed to prevent it from being swept back. Did it lose ground and turn broadside to the angry current it was quite sure to capsize. And sometimes, just as victory was within our grasp, we would be hurled back from the bar and forced far down-stream before we could gain control of the boat and renew the attack. For life and action there was nothing much more picturesque and nerve-stirring in river travel than the task of surmounting the ripples.

The flag went up over the fort to announce that they had seen us, and we fired a volley as we neared the landing-place. The fort, a Government post, stood on top of a hundred-foot bluff. Below it was a village of nearly two hundred Indians of the Little Osage nation. And nearly all of them were crowding the bank to receive us!

Le Fou called out to them in their own tongue, and they made much of him. The simpleton developed quite a swagger as he walked among them.

I jumped ashore and was promptly seized by a wrinkle-faced warrior who insisted on my entering his lodge. He wished to show me seven scalps, fastened to sticks and adorned with raccoon tails, hanging above the smoke to cure. He told me they were Iowa hair, coming from the heads to two old men and five women. The old villain was immensely proud of them, and more so when I sternly told him they were the cause of the big war-party now on the way to attack the Indian villages on the Great Osage.

Major George C. Sibley, the Indian agent, came hurrying down from the fort, followed by two men carrying a piece of ice in a blanket. This was a very acceptable gift to the men, especially after I had rationed out a dash of whisky to each. Sibley invited me to the fort where he might talk with me apart from the crew. Leaving Lachapel in charge of the boat, I accompanied him.

Once we were seated and waiting for dinner to be served he announced—

"I have something to tell you which is worrying me and will worry Mr. Manuel."

"War has been declared by us against Great Britain," I said.

"Not that. A Frenchman left that word some days ago. An Omaha—Maha was our old name for them—Indian wandered down here last Spring and has been living here until recently. He stole a blanket and escaped up the river. I sent men after him, but they didn't catch up with him. That proves he went ashore and got a horse and is returning home overland."

I eyed him blankly. It was grotesque to allow the theft of a trade blanket to blind one's eyes to the war. Sibley paused and tamped down the tobacco in his pipe, then continued:

"The blanket belonged to a Frenchman living on Audrain's farm a mile below here. It has an ax and peace-pipe worked in the corners in red. If you see such a blanket destroy it, and be sure to destroy the Indian carrying it. If the Omaha reaches home it will mean several thousand dead Indians. For they will die like flies."

"You mean?"

"That the Frenchman had smallpox, and the stolen blanket will spread it."

This was dire news indeed. The Arikara

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alone had dwindled from seventeen big divisions to three small villages in the Sioux country. And much the same fate had visited all the nations. Mr. Manuel, once warned, would be able to exert his great influence to prevent the tribes from joining with the upper-Mississippi Indians, but against the smallpox he would be helpless. The rapidity with which the dread scourge can pass over and all but wipe out a red nation numbering thousands is appalling. The Mandans, from whom I got my nickname, were within fifty years reduced from nine villages to two.* I assured Mr. Sibley that the Omaha's life was forfeited if we could overtake him. Already he must have contracted the dread disease and was doomed to death.

After eating I hurried back to the boat and told the hunters about the thief and the blanket, and pronounced sentence of death upon him. A word to Lachapel, and he was driving his workmen on board, quite desolating the poor fellows by his announcement, that there would be no feasting nor dancing.

A few miles above the fort we spied a group of Osage men riding down the southwest bank of the river and went ashore to interrogate them. As they lacked the pretended indifference of the upper tribes they talked garrulously enough. They had seen the Omaha at a distance; but he had refused to halt and talk with them, although they had signaled for him to do so. He was well mounted.

I asked if he were wearing a robe or a blanket. A blanket, which flapped in the breeze as he galloped along. They had escaped destruction and did not know it. They had asked death to pause and converse with them and were resentful because death had permitted them to escape. And all that had saved them was the thief's fear lest they steal the gay blanket.

We left them and did not halt again until we came to two hunters in camp. Now that the beautiful Ohio was being thickly peopled the Missouri took first place as a game country.

I had the hunters aboard and stood treat. Warmed by the dram, they were willing enough to answer questions. The Omaha had passed their camp in a dugout and had refused to come ashore, although they had fired on him. They were artless in condemning his stubbornness is keeping away from them, although they had shot at him. I told them what he carried, and they ceased cursing him.

From the evidence of the hunters it was plain that the Osage men had met the thief some distance above the hunters' camp. The fact the man had stuck to his canoe so long gave me hope that we were closer to him than I had imagined.

We resumed the chase. Now we had passed the last settlement of whites; and Lachapel at the steering-oar gave the song, and the men marked time with their oars and bawled each alternating line. And whenever I dream of the river I am apt to hear the old favorite faintly ringing in my ears again, although the singers are long since returned to the dust.

Le fils du roi s'en va chassant—
Ye, ye ment!
Avec son grand fusil d'argent,
Tous du long de la rivière,
Legèrement, ma bergère,
Legèrement—ye ment!

It was from Mr. Manuel that the *patron* had learned the trick of diverting the *voyageurs'* minds from gloomy thoughts once the last settlement was left behind. My Americans, hardened scamps, needed no songs to bolster up their spirits. A regiment could not have kept them down the river when the forks of the Missouri called.

There was Amos Richardson—no relation to my gigantic hunter—who settled near St. Louis in 1803. He worked as a trapper for Sanguinet and Robidou from 1804 to 1809, and spent the Summer with the Arikaras in 1810. After living for four years without seeing a white man's house he felt the urge to return to civilization. All the way down the river he repeatedly vowed he would never visit the Indian country again. After three weeks in the settlements he set off for the Spanish Waters.* He excused his return to the wilds by saying:

"I find so much deceit and selfishness among white men I already tire of them. Whisky I can not drink, and bread and salt I don't care for."

I have lived to see the river change. I

*In 1837 the Mandans were reduced by smallpox from 1600 to 31.

*Head of the Arkansas River.

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can walk on dry land where once I fought to get my keelboat through. When we rowed and poled and cordelled and sailed to find Mr. Manuel there were deer and bear and turkey to be had any time in what is now the State of Missouri; as well as gray and red-bellied snipe, geese and duck and brant. Now, as in the old times, the sand-bars at every point always are crescent in shape, and cool and smooth and clean. But the wild life lurks in some back-country fastness.

We passed the mouth of the Kansas, low and flat and covered with willows. We passed the old Kansas Village,* in its glory when the Kansas Indians were a powerful nation, but now deserted. We passed many of these dead villages; and I found pathos in considering the ancient paths leading along the hills and still discernible where they branched down the river. Throughout the many centuries prior to the coming of the first white man countless numbers of these villages had their brief glory and were then abandoned.

The timber was thinning. The hills, not so high as those of the Ohio, were more gracious in my estimation as they seldom were rocky, but were rounded knolls, carpeted with velvet grass and in the season decorated with many flowers. By the time we made St. Michael's Prairie the varieties of woods began decreasing, with the scant oak and ash inclining to dwarfed forms. Rushes, so thick lower down the river, were now seldom seen.

The growth along the banks was largely confined to cottonwoods, but the islands usually wore a graceful fringe of willows. A royal empire given over to wolves and deer, buffalo farther up, and occasional bands of red men wandering from their villages!

We came to the Winter ground of Crooks and McLellan and visited the few log huts still standing. McLellan was one of "Mad Anthony" Wayne's runners and along in years when he entered the fur trade on the Missouri. As early as 1805 he was trading with the Omahas and facing the fierce opposition of the Northwest Company. At each stage of the journey we had expected to overtake the Indian with the smallpox blanket, and each day we were disappointed.

*Site of Kansas City.

WHEN the climax of the chase broke it was finished before we had had time to shudder. Richardson, who had been taken aboard with a deer and a fat bear, was standing in the bow behind the *bosseman*, who in turn was yelling orders to the cordelling crew strung out along the right-hand bank. Suddenly there appeared a mounted Indian, clean-cut against the sky on top of a sixty-foot bluff. He was leaning far forward over his horse's neck the better to look down on us.

I had just observed him when Richardson threw up his long rifle and fired. The thin, whip-like report was at once followed by the Indian pitching over his horse's head and bumping down the steep bank and into the river. Before I could remonstrate over what first appeared to be a cold-blooded killing Richardson pointed to the muddy water astern.

Then I glimpsed it—the blanket blown loose from the dead man when he fell and now floating soggily in the swift current. The ax and calumet, worked in red in one corner, were briefly exposed to our view; then a current sucked it beneath an *embarras*, and we saw it no more. The dead man never showed after striking the water.

"Well, Mandan," slowly remarked Richardson as he proceeded to load his rifle, "that's about the way it seems to go. You oughter cover his bones with a ration of rum. And if the Injuns smoke with the Britishers I'll be mighty sorry I didn't let him take his blanket home. If the Omahas got it they'd spread it among all t'other tribes."

It looks like a cold-blooded business as written down, but it was a merciful act. That one rifle shot saved innumerable red lives. The savage himself must have been marked as victim for the sickness when knocked from his horse. But I could not make a fête of it; and the hunter went without his dram for the time being.

I heard him grumbling to his mates that it was a —— of an outfit that would not even make good his "shoot of powder." As he was using the Missouri Fur Company's powder and ball this was a bit of extravagant speaking. If it had been a Sioux, or an Arikara, or a Minnetaree, I would not have felt so sober over the homicide; but the Omahas were ever popular with the traders.

We slipped by the Little Nemeha and

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then halted at Sun Island long enough to replace our mast with one of young oak. The landmarks were the same, and yet the country was new to me.

Heretofore I had seen it only in the Spring or late Fall, with the new grass a few inches tall, or burned to a brown color, and with the geese wedging north or south. Now the grass was tall and the foliage fully matured.

We camped opposite the two hundred foot bluffs and enjoyed a round of liquor. Richardson tossed off his dram with a knowing wink at me, and when I was passing him he stealthily whispered:

"See what you was up to back along, Mandan, all the time. This drink is for my snagging that cuss, only you didn't want to mix up whisky with a funeral procession."

It was near sunset, and the men were making merry over their one drink and the supper of game when Le Fou startled us all by an outlandish scream and much grotesque dancing. Several of us had the same thought—that the poor wretch had stumbled upon a snake and had been bitten. Belter yanked out his knife to lance the wound and cause the blood to flow freely, while Lang emptied some gunpowder in one hand and moistened it from a kettle of water and then snatched a brand from the fire. He intended to rub the powder into the bite and then touch it off and thus cauterize the wound. James yelled for me to bring out whisky to pour down the victim's gullet.

"Mercy of the good God! My master! *M'sieur* of Balise!" howled Le Fou.

And toward our fires came a man, strange in outward appearance for the country he was in. He was wearing knee-breeches and a velvet coat and the remains of a lacy *jabot*. His hair, long and black, was held back by a handkerchief. He carried a hunter's long rifle, and in the gay sash at his waist was a knife, longer even than those used in butchering game. His clothing was torn and stained, and his face was drawn and haggard. Yet the fire burned brightly in his eyes, and his step had the assurance of a cock-turkey.

"My master! *M'sieur* of Balise!" repeated Le Fou's strident voice.

The stranger halted, smiled whimsically at the prancing figure, and softly exclaimed:

"Death of my life! Le Fou, and up here! Head of a pig! What do you with this noble company!"

"I came to find you! I came to find you!" shrilly cried the half-wit.

With a graceful bow to me and the *patron* the man introduced himself by saying:

"*Messieurs*, I am called the man from Balise. I am entitled to be called Un Homme du Nord. For I am at home at the end of the Mississippi and the beginning of the Missouri. I give you most respectful greetings, *messieurs*.

"This dancing pig was a ward of mine in lower Louisiana. I have saved him some blows, some abuse. He fastened to me like a burr. I had hoped I had lost him, but the good God wills otherwise. He appears again to curse me with the bother of him."

"There is food," I told him, pointing to the kettles; for I could ever tell when a man is suffering from hunger.

He dropped down by a kettle and with his knife, long enough to have been the blade of a sword-cane, speared a large piece of bear meat and dropped it on the ground before him and proceeded to wolf it like a starved animal. No one spoke while he was devouring the meat. When he had finished he cleaned his fingers on the grass and rose and told me:

"I am a good hunter. I ask *m'sieur* the *bourgeois* to take me with him as a hunter. Fate has played a scurvy trick on me. I will work for my keep."

"Your reasons for going up the river must be very pressing," I remarked.

He shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"*M'sieur* will pardon if I do not make this a confessional. It was wisdom for me to leave lower Louisiana. There was a matter of trouble. I would spare *m'sieur's* ears. I came away hurriedly, not even pausing for a cup of wine in old St. Louis.

"I have no powder. My canoe tipped over. I saved my rifle, but it is useless without powder. I have been camping here and living on what I could kill with my long knife. But give me powder and ball and I am a good hunter."

"What is your name?"

"I am called the man from Balise."

And he ventured on a humorous little smile.

"That is not a name," I told him.

"Then Balise, if *m'sieur* will be so charitable."

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There was small profit in inquiring into a man's antecedents when bound for the upper Missouri. The men I remember who made their mark in the fur trade would have been great in any calling. And there were others who were valuable in the red country, but who did not dare tarry long even in frontier settlements. And so it will always be until the last border is crossed.

James spoke for the hunters, sneering—

"Balise is a —— of a name."

The newcomer bowed courteously to the bearded riflemen and sweetly said:

"If *m'sieur* has time to walk with me to the end of the sand-bar he shall learn I have a —— of a knife. The one who returns will be heir to all that the other man left."

James was on his feet in a second, throwing off his hunting-shirt and testing the edge of his butcher-knife by running his tongue along the keen edge. Richardson was inarticulate with rage at having the quarrel stolen from under his nose.

"*Patron*, shoot the man who starts the fight," I commanded.

Lachapel had been keeping one of the brass blunderbusses on deck, now we were nearing the dangerous country. He picked up the heavy, murderous weapon, always a favorite with the Spaniards, and held it ready. He quietly announced:

"Enough of this foolishness. You know me, James. You, stranger, will be fed to the catfish if you make any more dueling talk."

"Death of my life, *m'sieur* the *patron!* I but resent the insult. I come starved to your camp. I am fed from your kettle. Then, *m'sieur*, the hunter takes offense and would fasten a quarrel on me. What would you have? There are some things a man does not endure. I have lost my name, and am almost unarmed in a wild country, but I have not lost my pride. Kill me, if you wish, *m'sieur;* but do not, I beg of you, kill my self-respect."

James, feeling rather sheepish, struggled into his shirt, and growled—

"There ain't no hurt to speak of a man's river-name."

With a conciliatory smile the stranger returned:

"That is true, *m'sieur*, if it is not said with a laugh that lashes one's soul into tatters. I have suffered much. My skin has been worn too thin. If no one questions my courage I shall be pleased to smoke a peace calumet with *m'sieur* the hunter."

"Certainly there will be no war-tobacco smoked here," growled Lachapel. "And we are having too much talk. You have been up the river?"

"Who is there here who speaks in the tongue of the Mandans?" he asked in that language.

I answered him, whereat he smiled and repeated it in the tongue of the Arikara. Again I answered him, as did three of the hunters. Up went the black brows, and he addressed us in the dialect of the Teton Sioux. Richardson and I answered him, but the others were silent, for the Teton tribes were spread over the country far west of the Missouri, but ranged in times from the Pawnee country to that of the Mandans. So hostile had they been to our first keelboats that we called them "the Pirates of the Missouri." Only men who ascended far up the river and spent some time in their country came to know their dialect; so both the hunter and I knew the stranger must have roamed widely and have observed closely.

He next spoke in the dialect of the Yankton Sioux, who live in the southern part of the Sioux domains and who gave us the least trouble of all the Sioux tribes. He was answered in a chorus.

I took my turn and spoke to him in the tongue of the Yanktonais, who were more to be dreaded by traders than even the Tetons, and who kept up their hostility after the Tetons came to an understanding with the whites. Balise, as he saw fit to call himself, replied promptly and exclaimed in French:

"Death and life! But *m'sieur* has as many tongues as the devil!"

I spoke in Spanish, and he joined me as if it were his mother tongue. I spoke as an Osage but now his reply limped and halted. In English he cried:

"*M'sieur* has my excessive admiration. Yet he looks too young to speak so widely."

"He who lives with Manuel Lisa needs to know more than English and French," I retorted.

And this was strict truth; for Mr. Manuel spoke the two languages most villainously. I was accustomed to conversing with him only in Spanish or in one of the Indian dialects.

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I studied the fellow for a bit. His compliments were not displeasing. I wondered if he would be an irritant to the Americans. A glance at their bearded faces satisfied me that his proficiency in the red dialects had impressed them very favorably. Nor had it hurt him any in their estimation when he challenged James to a duel. They were accepting him as veteran Winterer.

"I do not ask why you ran away from lower Louisiana," I told him; "but I do ask why you go up the Missouri instead of the Mississippi or the Ohio."

"The reason is simple, *m'sieur*, even if you think it absurd. Concede that one may believe he must live. Then say I was born a gentleman in a country where a gentleman can not work without losing caste. But a gentleman can follow the peltry trade. He can even take an Indian wife and yet hold his caste.

"We human beings are droll, are we not? For such a gentleman it would be a dog's life to live in the towns with empty pockets. I had too many enemies to remain in Balise or New Orleans. I know the Missouri country. I would be a stranger in the upper Mississippi country.

"Had I had gold I should have gone up the Ohio to your New York. As it is, M'sieur Empty Pockets is here, begging for passage up the river. If *m'sieur* is unwilling that I join him will he be so good as to let me have a pound or two of powder and some balls? I have a gold piece. I can pay."

And from his coat he fished out a buckskin bag, and from that extracted a Spanish pistole.

There were many such as he, masterful men in their wild way. Men who have helped to build empires and have been buried unnoticed under the cornerstones. They were men who could take the lead in vast enterprises, and, if not for some mental kink that made them irresponsible in the crucial moment, could have marched on to complete success. Yet the same men would live in a frowsy lodge and rear "breed" children rather than insult their ancestry by honest labor unless it be connected with the chase.

Well, we utilized scum in those days—creatures whose intellect did not pass beyond the cunning necessary to match the wiles of the savage. And this fellow was far above the average river man in intelligence. I believed that he would make a good man for me if his brain held no unsuspected kinks. I told him:

"Mr. Manuel is somewhere above the Arikara villages. You may go with us as a hunter. We will leave it to Mr. Manuel to say whether you draw wages or get only your keep. I will supply you with a river man's outfit regardless of what he may decide.

"But you must remember this: I am the *bourgeois* until this outfit is turned over to Mr. Manuel. I will have no strife. You have asked yourself among us in a destitute condition. You must obey all orders cheerfully."

"Blood of my heart! *M'sieur* is both kind and considerate. He saves me from living on raw meat without salt. I have had no fire since I lost my powder. I will remember this great kindness. I will be like a lamb under orders."

And with a deep bow he stepped back among the hunters.

Le Fou, until now a tense figure, and rather a dramatic figure to my surprize, suddenly melted into emotion and threw himself on the ground and tried to clutch Balise by the ankles. Balise spurned him carelessly to one side, seated himself by the fire and produced an empty pipe and began sucking it. Tobacco was promptly offered him by the hunters, for which he expressed grateful thanks.

I noticed he accepted the pouch proffered by James. This recalled my promise, and I got together a boatman's equipment for him consisting of a three-point blanket, a calico shirt, a cotton handkerchief, one and a half yards of blue cloth, a small knife and three pounds of tobacco, and entered a charge of seven dollars and eighty-three cents against him. I told him he would draw powder and ball in the morning. He thanked me very profusely and repaid the tobacco to James with scrupulous care.

The Americans had forgotten their desire to quarrel with him and were watching him with amusement and admiration struggling for supremacy. There was something in his nonchalant bearing that appealed strongly to them. Now that he had been accepted as a member of the outfit his confidence was complete. I found it was annoying me, but was unable to dis-

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cover why it should. Suddenly he rose and removed his pipe and inquired of the *bosseman:*

"This head of a pig here, Le Fou? Does he do a man's work?"

Being a hunter, he could have addressed me or the *patron.* I began to wonder if he had read my thoughts and was endeavoring to conduct himself with less aplomb. The *bosseman* turned to the *patron* who shortly informed Balise—

"He isn't worth the tallow he eats."

"He will be, *m'sieur* the *patron.* He will work very hard. It is difficult for him to understand. But he can work. He looks upon me as his protector, It would be unnatural if the protector worked harder than his ward. And I shall work very hard. Something tells me that Le Fou will convince you that he can be very capable."

With that he bowed and joined the hunters and at once became one of their fraternity, although the creoles were keen to claim him because of his French blood. And I will say at this point that so long as Le Fou was with us on that tragic trip he earned his passage and *voyageur's* wages, although never to my knowledge did Balise lay a hand on him.

CHAPTER III

THE RIVER TAKES TOLL

BALISE was a man of surprizes. His weather-worn clothing suggested the beau and was unsuited for our wild environment. But velvet coat and lace *jabot* were forgotten, and he was accepted by all as a veteran Winterer.

He possessed all the qualities that go to make a boon companion. He not only adapted himself to the tight-lipped cynicism of the Americans, but he also outdid the creoles in song and jest. His abandon in his moments of merry-making gave an impression of irrepressible youth. Yet when I conversed with him aside and he had dropped his whimsicalities and was speaking soberly he reflected his age—sixty-odd years.

I never got used to that—his youth and his years. I found myself feeling a bit overawed as I watched him amusing the boatmen and remembered that he was old enough to be my father. It did not seem possible that he had lived more than threescore years, and yet there was no doubting his being with Don Antonio de Ulloa of Spain at Balise in 1768, or seventeen years before I was born. He must have learned much wickedness when very young. He was with Don Ulloa when but eighteen years old.

Then came the astounding realization that he had lived seventeen more colorful years before Mandan Ramsay entered the scene as a yowling babe. So far as face and bearing went, now he was well fed, he would have passed as a man of my age, or perhaps a trifle younger. Except when he was alone with me and indulging in reminiscences he would have been taken by any one as being a fiery young man.

He had circled the round of hazardous adventure before I commenced life. This realization often annoyed me, especially when I was giving him his orders. He was quick to obey and with every appearance of respectful eagerness, but I was always thinking that inwardly he was laughing at me, perhaps putting me down as an egotistic young man.

That he was with the Spaniard in 1768 satisfied me that he had been incorrigible when very young and had indulged in some unusual bit of wildness that made his life safer under the flag of Spain than it could be under the Lilies. While frank to proclaim the fact that he had followed Ulloa he was close-mouthed as to his reasons for not being with his countryman, Aubry. Whatever youthful escapade had alienated him from his race during those stormy days, when one must go very far to exceed the license of the times and when the great Louisiana country was being used as a shuttle-cock by Europe, the offense must have been most serious. Undoubtedly there was blood on the reason, some unforgivable killing. From his patches of talk I gathered that he had never returned to France.

He spoke with much warmth of Don Ulloa's beautiful Peruvian bride, and smacked his lips in dwelling on her wealth. But it was no intrigue that kept him in Ulloa's train. He found a refuge with the Spaniard, and I have no doubt he more than once satisfied his patron he was worthy of sanctuary. He was brutally frank in depicting some detached incident—usually one that chilled the blood, although always

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possessing the background of apparent necessity. He touched upon violent deaths with the indifference one might display in mentioning a pack of prime beaver.

His knowledge of the Indian dialects was remarkable, and as I had never met him or heard of him during my few years on the river I was compelled to believe he was one of the first white men to visit the forks of the Missouri, having ventured that far before even Mr. Manuel, or members of the exploring expedition, had reached the country of the Crows and Blackfeet. I had to hold him in respect, perhaps envy him a bit, when I pictured him as living among the upper tribes before I was born.

Possibly he went up-country, staking his life against every mile of the long trail because some caprice of fortune had removed the protection of Spain. This substantiated my suspicion that his offense against France had been beyond all pardon.

In addition to the dialects of the upper river he was familiar with those of the southern tribes, such as the Cherokees, the Creeks and the Chickasaws. All in all I had to set him down as a man of very high intellectual gifts, who had gone decidedly wrong in early youth and had to take pot-luck with Fate in the New World. This premature withdrawal from the life he had been intended for must have prevented his attaining a normal balance.

Within a few minutes after a serious talk with me he would join the creoles and win shrieking applause by his nonsense and buffoonery, or turn back to the hunters and crack their bearded faces with some droll tale. It was astounding how he had dodged his years and had remained a boy.

And there seemed to be no end to his talent for merry-making. He was ever doing something different in our hours of relaxation.

I watched him secretly, thinking to surprize him when he believed himself alone with himself; thinking to detect an expression of weariness on his clean-shaven face. But not so. He never betrayed what was beneath the surface.

Our men took it for granted that he had indulged in some wild indiscretion in New Orleans and had been forced to flee north in great haste. Yet I could not believe that some tavern brawl, or theft of a woman's love, had driven him north. There slowly grew up in my mind a conviction that he was one without a country unless the new republic adopted him. However, he was an excellent hunter and brought in his share of the game.

Le Fou idolized him. The change in the simpleton after his master, or *patron*, joined us was another matter to wonder at. The fellow was working hard and intelligently—not to please me or satisfy his mates, but to win a nod of approval from Balise. Each night usually there was room in the evening program for Balise to call Le Fou before him and gravely demand—

"Pig, how have you done while I have been hunting this day?"

"Oh, *m'sieur*, my master; none have pulled harder on the cordelle. None have rowed stronger with the oar, or pushed harder on the pole."

Then he would be dismissed with a nod and fall back to the edge of the circle, where he would remain with his eyes fastened on his protector in the same worshipful homage that one sees in the eyes of a faithful dog.

When we were within two days of the Platte and planning to camp near Iron Eye Hill—named after an Otoe chief—Balise displayed a rare quality of courage; for there is courage and courage, and men who have no fear of death may turn aside from certain avenues which lead to it. We were at a point where the river was two miles wide and were fighting against a strong current at a difficult bend. Many trees had fallen in with the bank and were sown thickly under the water for some distance from the shore. Lachapel read the danger at a glance and veered widely to keep outside the deadly area. He was depending entirely upon the oars as the water was too deep for the poles, and the cordelle was out of the question.

Besides the water-worn snags and sawyers there were this season's trees, still holding some of their Spring foliage. Much of the débris was submerged, but enough gnarled branches and green tops showed to warn us of the extent of the trap. It was a most desolate scene, the wide river and the moving branches of the fallen timber.

Lachapel began a river song and attempted to make a crossing. With every oar at work we barely held our own for minutes at a time. Sometimes, by a tremendous effort or because the river was off guard

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for a moment, we would gain the length of the boat and then fight most desperately to hold it. The *patron* glanced at me and shook his head, meaning he could not make the crossing.

This decision left him two choices—either to lose much time by dropping far down the river to quieter water and making up the opposite bank, or to endeavor to skirt the submerged timbers and turn inshore above the bend where he could use the cordelle. He preferred the latter chance and called out loudly for the men to exert themselves as never before.

To get above the snag-sown field would require an advance of a short distance. If we failed we would then drop down the river and lose the greater part of the day. In a final frenzy of effort we straightened out against the current, remained stationary for a bit, then began to edge ahead. It became only a matter of rods before we could turn inshore. Lachapel yelled—

"A double ration of rum if you make it!"

The creoles, working at their best, suddenly discovered unsuspected resources of energy, and we surely began to win the fight. Repeatedly the *patron* hurled at the men the promise of liquid rewards, and they kept their strength from wavering. Then it was that Le Fou, working most valiantly, lost his balance and through some piece of awkwardness fell overboard.

Before the fellow touched the water my brain was telling me we would never see him again. But scarcely had he disappeared before Balise jumped in after him and instantly vanished.

That required a different courage from what many men, unafraid of death, possess. My hunters were fearless when facing an Indian attack of overwhelming odds; but to leap into the turbulent waters and be swept down to strangle under the roots of the hidden trees was much like diving into a pool of terrible sea-monsters.

The boat was about to round the upper end of the trap when the accident occurred. And the muddy tide was flowing like a mill-race. As Balise jumped my brain told me we had lost two men—one of them a very valuable man. The swirl of the torrent showed nothing except soiled foam as the waters fretted and tore at the hidden trees and snaky branches.

Then Richardson gave a howl; and Lachapel and I saw what he had seen—the black head of Balise miraculously appearing down-stream. He seemed to be stationary. A second glance told us the reason. One hand was clutching a big sawyer; the other was clinging to the limp form of Le Fou. The sawyer sank and dragged the two from sight; then pushed them up into view again.

Lachapel yelled an order, and the boat was allowed to shoot along with the current, with the creoles and hunters lining the sides and stretching forth hands and poles. There was not more than one chance in a million of rescuing either of the men; and I, who had seen men drown in much gentler water, believed we were simply imperiling all the crew by the maneuver. Even did the boat pass within reach of Balise it would go by like an arrow. Did the man attempt to seize pole or hand he must leave go of his hold on the sawyer. As it was he was restored to the surface only long enough to snatch a mouthful of air.

Lachapel and I in the stern thrust out our poles in vain, for the sawyer had withdrawn Balise before we got within reach. Then the stern swung out and the bow swung in, rendering the efforts of the boatmen futile.

It remained for Richardson to accomplish the impossible. Holding what originally was the most unfavorable position of all—in the bow—he got his chance when the stern swung wide of the snags. With the *bosseman* clinging to one leg and Lang gripping the other, the big hunter fairly threw himself over the bow as the sawyer was drawing the two men under water; and the next instant his huge, hairy hands had Balise by the neck.

Then developed the second phase of the battle against the river—the stubborn task of working Richardson inboard until we could seize the Frenchman. When Balise came over the side he had Le Fou under his left arm. The creoles resumed their oars to save the boat from destruction, and for several minutes we had no time to examine the two prostrate figures on the deck at the bow.

After we had straightened out and were renewing our fight to stem the current Balise got on his knees and began working over Le Fou. The poor creature looked like a drowned rat, and I assumed he must be dead. But Balise worked savagely as if willing him to live.

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By the time the exhausted creoles had conquered the current and had gained gentler water Le Fou began to moan and groan and choke, suffering the agony of those who are brought back from over the hill by resuscitation. For several minutes his lungs struggled desperately to function, his gaping mouth emitting terrible cries. Balise continued his labors, savagely repelling all offers of assistance, until the fellow twisted from him and writhed about on the deck and at last dragged himself to his hands and knees.

Satisfied that the half-wit was no longer in danger, Balise began to abuse him for a careless, worthless dog, cursing him in various tongues and ending with several heavy buffets on both sides of his head. Then, turning to me, Balise politely reminded us—

"There was a matter of a double ration of rum did the brave *voyageurs* gain this shore."

"As soon as we tie up it shall be served," I told him. "You shall have a dram now; also Le Fou."

I had it ready while he was bringing Le Fou back to life. Both swallowed a dram; then Balise straightened and threw back his wet locks and said to Richardson:

"*M'sieur* looked like a long, strong angel when he caught me by the neck. Death of my life! But *m'sieur's* hands nearly squeezed the soul out of me! I would have hounded that pig through purgatory had he caused me to choke to death on that muddy water, or to expire in *m'sieur's* terrible hands. *M'sieur* will comprehend that I am trying to say I sense my indebtedness to him."

"Go to ——!" growled Richardson, disliking to be thanked.

"Undoubtedly *m'sieur* is a true prophet; but all in good time," was the affable response.

WE WERE glad to call it a day and go into camp. The mercurial creoles, further enlivened by a double dram, began singing and joking as they built fires. A storm was brewing, a fact we had not had time to note while fighting the river; and by the time the kettles were boiling, the leaden curtain was dragging down the river and blotting the opposite shores from sight.

Much lightning played throughout the storm, and the thunder boomed hollowly, thrown back between the bluffs. The rain put out the fires before the meat was half-cooked; but we made a meal of it and called it good.

The weather cleared that night, and at 2:30 o'clock in the morning Lachapel aroused the *voyageurs* so we might take advantage of a good wind. We sailed until sunrise, when the wind dropped and left us no excuse for longer postponing breakfast.

We found the current very strong when we resumed the journey, yet by eleven o'clock we reached the mouth of the Platte, at this season of the year emptying into the Missouri by three channels. Usually I had seen it only in time of a Spring flood, when the intervening land was submerged and it would measure a mile across its shallow waters. Now with the mouth choked with islands and bars and with its water the same color as that of the Missouri, it might be possible for a new man to pass it by without suspecting it existed.

Up this river dwelt the Otoes and the Pawnees; and while we feared them not at all we kept a sharp outlook as there was ever danger of some Sioux war band lurking about. We ate our dinner on a long island between two of the Platte's channels. No thick timber broke the monotony of the open, bare plains, and yet I always found the face of the country interesting. What impressed one the most, I think, was the idea of emptiness.

After dinner the men began gazing expectantly at Lachapel. As the Platte forms the dividing-line between the upper and lower Missouri the *voyageurs* had established the custom of shaving all those who were passing the mouth of the big tributary for the first time. The victim could escape the rough sport provided he gave a treat, and the crew was willing to accept that in place of fun. Lachapel smiled grimly and nodded, and the men at once began canvassing the outfit. They discovered that Le Fou was the only one who had not passed the river before. With whoops of joy they set about preparing the entertainment.

Le Fou was greatly agitated and kept close to his protector. For some reason Balise did not join in the laughter and mock threats. The men were rough, and their idea of a joke was to subject a victim

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to a certain amount of indignities. However, I had survived the experience on my first trip up the river and had scant sympathy with one who tried to dodge it. As I stood apart Balise came to me and with his customary bow began:

"The witless one, *m'sieur*. The drop in the river has addled what poor brains he may have possessed. Now if he pays for passing the river only Our Lady knows what will be his state of mind."

"I will tell them not to hurt him," I replied.

"Ah, head of death! If that be all I could see they did not hurt him."

"That talk is bad to make before Americans," I warned him.

"*M'sieur* is an American?"

"Of a certainty," I snapped back. "Did you take me for a *mangeur de lard* or an Englishman?"

"*M'sieur* speaks so many tongues. Then again the country is so new that many men always think of themselves as being French or Spanish or English.

"But ten thousand pardons. I come to beg a favor and have made *m'sieur* impatient."

And he sighed, and I had a suspicion he was mocking me. But there was no doubting his earnestness as he hurriedly continued:

"Le Fou can not stand any more shocks to his poor head. He is a pig. But he has followed me. Can not *m'sieur* suggest that the man give a treat to save his poor face from being scraped?"

And he glanced toward Richardson, who was making a great show of sharpening his butcher-knife.

"He hasn't anything to trade for a treat. I can not favor one man above another."

He fished out the buckskin bag and again produced his gold coin, and said:

"He is a pig. Yet I saved his life. After risking my life to save his it does not come hard to pay for a treat to save what few wits he has. If *m'sieur* will be so good as to accept."

I could not take his gold piece. Nor could I establish a precedent of contributing a treat to save a man from paying the penalty of his first voyage beyond the mouth of the Platte. The near-tragedy, however, furnished me with an excuse; and, walking to the boisterous group, I casually remarked to the men that as the only available victim had just passed through a very disagreeable experience the Missouri Fur Company would for once be willing to stand a ration of drink to spare him the ordeal.

The creoles were all for the drink; but the hunters were like New Englanders in their town-meetings. They withdrew to discuss the proposition among themselves. Richardson, speaking for his comrades, reported back that one drink was not worth bothering with; that the hunters preferred to go without it to being tantalized by a solitary dram. When it came to choose between shaving Le Fou and a real drinking-bout the liquor would receive their votes. As it was they were not interested and believed they would derive more enjoyment in witnessing the travel-initiation. Here was a rock on which Balise's hope would have split had he not suggested:

"One drink is surely to laugh at, *m'sieur*. But six drinks can make a man feel quite merry. While one drink is so much river water to an American hunter, six of them are well worth gaming for. Good luck, like a little bird, hovers over our heads. She is waiting to alight on her favorite. Let him whom luck favors have his own and his five companions' drinks."

Half a dozen drinks in St. Louis, or in St. Charles, would be but a taste to the hard-headed men; but that number of drams at the mouth of the Platte had a kindly savor. It was quite likely that few of them would live to see the drinking-places of the lower river again. Even Richardson smiled slightly. His friends exchanged glances. He smacked his hands together and loudly cried:

"Let it be so! Me or one of the others will have six full drinks. The losers go dry. You Frenchies oughter git the same game. Think of one man having twenty drinks!"

I was glad the creoles refused the suggestion. They sang and laughed like children when having only river water to drink. Each man would make much of his ration and be slow in consuming it instead of tossing it off raw as would an American. There was not one of them who would forego a mild stimulation on the chance of getting drunk.

Leaving the hunters to draw lots, I had the *bosseman* get out a small keg. The *voyageurs* filed by me, each receiving his dram.

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Then came the tableau of James, the hunter. His face was shining with great joy; or so it appeared to me, although most of it was covered with a heavy beard. Balise took his defeat indifferently, but the other four hunters roundly cursed their ill luck, thereby adding to James' delight. Balise remained back beside Le Fou, staring dreamily up the river. The four hunters followed the lucky one, punishing themselves by enviously watching him swallow six small dipperfuls one after the other. It was amusing to watch their faces as they glared at him and waited to observe the first effects of the liquor. But James was a hardened sinner, and beyond a bit of loquacity and an inclination to sleep he showed no effect from his winnings.

Richardson, Lang, Belter and Long picked up their rifles and quit the camp in disgust, declaring that they would hunt and join us at Papillon Creek. As we could not hope to find much ash above this stream we had planned to halt there long enough to lay in a supply of the wood for poles.

In high spirits the *voyageurs* took the oars to round the point ahead; and Lachapel started one of their favorite songs, and was answered most rousingly by the score of voices:

"Dans mon chemin j'ai rencontré
Trois cavalieres bien montés,
L'on, ton, laridon dantée
L'on, ton, laridon dai."

And so on through the several verses of the ditty until we encountered stiff water above the bend. The boat became stationary in the swift current. Lachapel quickened the stroke, but we barely held our position. He shouted another order, and as one the men dropped their oars and leaped for their poles, and quickly took their places on the treadways and began walking the boat from beneath their feet, some of them following the pole with bent body until the free hand rested on the deck. Scarcely had they passed the length of the boat once before Balise grabbed my arm and cried out:

"The hunter, *bourgeois!* The hunter! In God's great mercy where is he?"

Stupefied for a moment, I rubbed my eyes and stared where James had been lying asleep in the bow on the starboard side. My gaze had dwelt on him even as the *voyageurs* sprang to get their poles; and during the few seconds of seeming confusion he had disappeared.

I repeated the alarm to Lachapel, high at the steering-oar, and ran forward to see if he had not rolled back under the forward part of the cargo box. He was not there. He was not on the boat. The *patron* gave an order, and the boat put about and raced down-stream with the crew on their knees, scanning the turbid current.

We went back and rounded the point and caught no glimpse of him. It was evident that he had rolled from the boat when the men exchanged oars for poles. Being heavy with sleep, he had made no outcry.

But how he had fallen into the river with no one seeing him go was a mystery. And yet I, standing at ease, had not seen him when he went overboard. In that muddy flood he might have been submerged only a few inches below the surface and yet remain undetected unless some part of his person happened to show above the water.

At last we put about and with heavy hearts began to fight our way back up-stream. Balise said:

"The water was shoal. He must have hit his head on a rock. Death of my life! To think such a fate should overtake one who had such luck in winning his comrades' liquor!"

"It results from breaking the rule and giving liquor to the men when they have not earned it," I regretted. "It had been better had Le Fou been shaved."

"Alas! Far better, *m'sieur*. Far better had the witless one drowned instead of the hunter. *M'sieur*, sometimes I think the river is a winding serpent, taking his prey here or there. No wonder the tribes believe it is a monster and keep much away from its banks."

THE loss of James stilled song and joke and cast a gloom over the superstitious creoles. The river had attempted to catch one victim, and, finding that he was weak of wit, had permitted him to be rescued. Relentlessly it had pursued its quest and had taken a man. Now would it be satisfied, or would some other disaster overtake us?

Had the hunter been killed by Indians

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his death would have been viewed as a natural—or at least a logical—event. For then he would have succumbed to the danger of his occupation. Or had a *voyageur* been drowned it would have been different. But it was sinister when a sturdy hunter, dozing peacefully enough and close to the bank, should be snatched away and murdered by the river in such a brusk manner. It was much like having some water monster thrust a tentacle over the side of the keelboat and whisk away a victim. The creoles were glad when we made a landing a short distance above Papillon Creek and they were sent off to secure ash for poles.

Sadly depressed by the shock of the man's death, I took my rifle and wandered to the trading-post Crooks and McLellan had built in 1810 and had abandoned a year later to enter the service of the Pacific Fur Company.

The elements had left marks on the single log house still standing. The stout door of two years before was gone; yet when I thrust my head inside the opening I discovered signs of recent occupancy.

Some dried buffalo meat hung from a peg. It had been freshly cured, as I could tell by sampling it; although I had eaten dried meat that was three years old and had found it perfectly good.

From a second peg hung a small bow, made of two buffalo ribs, cunningly reenforced with sinews. It was such a bow as the Arikaras are fond of making. Beside it hung a half-filled quiver.

I left the place and made inland and turned to move parallel to the shore in the hope of meeting the hunters before they reached the boat. I desired that they should learn the sad news of their comrade's death before regaining the river. I could hear the voices of the creoles, quite merry again as they chopped down the small ash. I could pick out the voice of Balise as he shouted to Le Fou to remember he was a pig. Then an arrow streaked by my head and stuck in a cottonwood.

I had treed myself before my mind could consciously function. I waited with my rifle ready to pot the would-be assassin once he betrayed his position. Either there was but one man and he was faint of heart, or else the growth was too thin to permit of successful stalking; for although I waited half an hour with all my faculties on the alert, I detected no signs of him.

Swinging to one side, I scouted back to the trading-house and reconnoitered the interior through a chink between the logs. The low room was empty, but what was most significant was the disappearance of the bow and quiver. Now I was positive the bow was of Arikara make, as that people favor small ones and often use an elk's horn, or willow, besides buffalo ribs.

There was something much more serious in the affair than the attack on my life. If an Arikara had discharged the arrow then the chances were that Mr. Manuel had had trouble with them, and perhaps had been destroyed. All of which reason, if correct, meant that the treacherous tribe had closed the river to Americans, and that the rest of the journey would be running a red gantlet.

I dared not tell my boatmen, for the news would throw them into a rare panic. They lacked that kind of physical courage that calls on a man to stand up and fight even if he knows he is to be soundly whipped. It was imperative, however, that I talk about it wth my hunters.

I returned to the boat and was requested by Le Fou to see how many poles he had cut. He pointed to them proudly and grimaced with a wide-toothed grin as I gave him a word of praise. I did not need to ask what part Balise had had in the simpleton's labor; for he was swinging his legs over the bow of the boat and smoking and calling out curt orders to his slave.

I must tell Balise, for he was a hunter. If any Arikaras were prowling along the shore it would be the hunters, ranging far back from the river, who would pay the toll. A slight elevation of the brows was enough of a hint to him, and after I had walked into the growth a way he overtook me, and softly remarked—

"*M'sieur* the *bourgeois* has something to tell."

I briefly related my experience and warned him to keep his eyes open when after game.

"Only one man, I should say, *m'sieur*," he gravely reasoned. "That is far better than an organized war-party. It does not follow that the Arikaras as a people are hostile to you. None of them are to be trusted when out alone or in small numbers, and happening upon a white man. I give

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my congratulations to *m'sieur* on his escape. It makes one ashamed when he wakes up in purgatory and remembers he was killed by a prowling red savage."

"The boatmen must not know. They have weak hearts when it comes to fighting. And yet they must be guarded and prevented from straying from the boat," I warned him.

"It would be very bad to tell them," he agreed. "Already they are afraid of the river. If they become afraid of the land they will be useless. Your Americans will be silent, of course?"

"If warned ahead so they will not blurt it out, yes," I told him. "I am anxious to see them and talk with them before they reach the boat."

We started to walk deeper into the grove and were halted by a loud hullo from a low hill ahead and some distance from the river. There were the four hunters outlined against the blue sky. They waved their hands and started toward us, moving rapidly and continuing to shout something which neither I nor Balise could catch, but which I believed was meant for a warning.

With Indians on my mind I directed my companion to hurry back to the boat and inform Lachapel we would start at once after the hunters arrived. He made for the river, and I ran to meet the hunters. When I got up to them I noticed their bearded faces were very savage, and I knew something had aroused the devil in them.

Richardson, in a voice hardly audible because of his rage, demanded—

"When did it happen?"

"What happened?" I gasped.

"Good ——! Can they kill James and you not know it? Or had he gone ashore to find us?"

I was astounded that they should know of the hunter's death, but could only say:

"James rolled off the boat in his sleep when the men jumped to use their poles at the bend below. But how did you know?"

The four stared at me and then at each other. Gathering my wits, I again prompted:

"How did you know he was dead? His body never rose after striking the water."

Lang explained:

"We changed our mind after going a bit and started back to catch you before you broke camp. From a little hill Belter seen something none of us could quite make out. We dropped down to the river and found James' body. And you're a-saying he was drownded?"

"Yes. One minute he was sleeping in the bow, close to the edge. The men couldn't make headway with the oars. They sprang to grab the poles. Perhaps they caused the boat to tip a bit. Balise, standing by my side, noticed James was gone. He was the first to miss James. We dropped back below the bend and looked for him. We never sighted him."

Their expressions slowly changed, and the four of them appeared to be deeply puzzled. Richardson slowly said:

"Of course that must be it. But it's 'tarnal strange how it could have happened. Even a drop overboard on a rock wouldn't 'a' been likely to 'a' done it. James had that tough head."

"What are you talking about now?" I demanded.

"*Bourgeois*, James had a place on top of his head like some one had fetched him a crack with some small weapon. But as you just as same as seen him roll off the boat he must 'a' landed head first on a sharp rock."

I agreed. I believed it. I had to believe it. It was madness to reason otherwise; and yet as I recalled the swift current it did not seem possible a man could fall into it without instantly being swept along, rolled over and over, before he could come into violent contact with a rock. Then again, no rocks had been visible above the surface where the drowning occurred: and while the water was shoal there was plenty of depth for the boat, surely enough for a man to land without sustaining serious injury.

Richardson then told me how they had dug a grave with their knives and had buried the poor fellow. They were much downcast over his death. I remembered my own recent experience near the abandoned trading-post, and told it, and warned them to say nothing of it before the creoles.

Belter promptly suggested: "The same cuss might 'a' found poor James and gi'n him a bust over the head with the end of a club to make sure he was dead. Then he seen us on the hill and sneaked away without troubling the hair."

"It must have been that way!" cried Lang. "No man rolling off a keelboat is going to drop head first. James was snoozing. He just rolled off as limp as a

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rag. It was a short drop. Even if he'd been awake and wanted to he couldn't 'a' straightened out with his heels in the air. It must 'a' been that Injun who give him the crack over the head."

No border man enjoys meeting with a mystery. What can not be explained dwells in his mind as a menace. Belter's hypothesis was at once accepted, and the men felt much better in their minds.

Returning to the boat, we found the creoles idle and the poles on board. The crew would have preferred making the night camp there; but neither I nor the hunters approved of the spot. James' death and the Arikara arrow urged us to press on to the high, clean meadows of Council Bluffs, some twenty miles away.

Shortly after starting we encountered a very large *embarras*, but were fortunate in finding a narrow passage between it and the shore, and managed to work above it by means of the cordelle. If it had not been for the drowning of the hunter it would have been amusing to observe the boatmen's fears when they saw the huge raft. They feared it was another trap of the river, and another victim would soon follow the hunter.

After that we had a fair sailing breeze and made six miles before night forced us to land. It was extremely dangerous to attempt night navigation on the Missouri, although the year before, when Mr. Manuel raced to overtake the Astorians under Hunt, we did gain considrable time by sailing on moonlight nights.

But those who have lived to see Mr. Fulton's steamboat conquer the rapacious river, and are ignorant of the conditions before this new mode of traveling, can not imagine the endless efforts necessary to row, pole or drag a long keel-boat through the bars and shoals, along crumbling cliffs, around many an *embarras* where the current sucks and boils along each side of the obstruction, and through the innumerable snags and deadly sawyers, and the bewildering mysteries of new channels.

CHAPTER IV

SUSPICIONS

WHEN Lewis and Clark gave the name of Council Bluffs to the spot where they held a council with the Otoe and Missouri Indians they prepared a newcomer to behold high cliffs; whereas, as all Winterers know, the elevation is gradual and does not rise more than forty feet before spreading out in a wonderful green floor as far as the eye can travel. Although the fur-trade as an organized industry on the Missouri was less than half a dozen years old the bluffs already was one of the most important points on the entire river, controling the junction of the great valleys of the Platte and the Missouri.

Many posts were to be established there in the years to come, scattered up and down both sides of the river; and most of them were to sink into oblivion, just as the innumerable abandoned towns of the aborigines have vanished. So it was not any one of the different "forts" which was to perpetuate the memory of the place, but rather the strategic importance of the locality.

We were detained at the foot of the bluffs nearly all day in repairing a broken rudder-stay, a piece of work that necessitated unloading the boat. As a result we made only a few miles before going into camp for the night.

The hunters ranged back from the river and at night brought in an elk and some prairie hens. I was uneasy during their absence, and when they were near enough for me to hear their guns I would listen most anxiously, fearing I might hear a volley from the trade muskets of hostile Indians. The boatmen suspected nothing of my worries or of the keen watch being kept by the hunters. Before they set out Balise had asked me to see that Le Fou did not wander from camp, and as a matter of etiquet I referred him to the patron, who was jealous when his authority was usurped even by the acting *bourgeois*.

When we came to a big bend, twelve miles by water and only a few hundred paces across the neck, we were favored by a shifting wind. Ordinarily one could not sail the bend, but by a freak of fortune we had an excellent breeze on entering the curving channel, and were delighted to find the wind veering as if to accommodate us. This left the crew idle, and as the distance across the neck was short and we could soon pick them up, the *patron* gave permission for eight or ten of them, under charge of the *bosseman*, to go afoot. The men were off and we were clipping along smartly before I discovered the absence of Le Fou. He had stolen ashore unnoticed by the *patron*.

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Back beyond the narrowest point of the neck stood a conical lodge of dressed elk-skins. Its isolation bespoke a burial lodge, marking the resting-place of some notable war leader who had died while returning home from a raid, or had been suddenly stricken down by disease. As there were no woods except along the bottoms there was small chance of a surprize attack.

As far as we could see the country was empty of life, and the one lodge accentuated this idea of emptiness. We made the twelve miles with but little poling and found our men lounging on the bank, smoking and telling stories.

Lachapel called out—

"Où est Le Fou?"

The boatmen seemed to notice his absence for the first time. They scrambled to their feet and stared suspiciously at the river as if believing that the monster had stolen him from under their very eyes. Then the *bosseman* swept his gaze inland and pointed, and there was the irresponsible creature running wildly toward us and screaming for us not to desert him. The *patron* cursed him out for loitering and ordered him on to the boat.

A few miles farther on we went into camp, although there was a good breeze and we could have sailed until sunset. But the hunters had not shown up, and we were drawing close to a very dangerous country.

Dusk came, but no hunters. We were greatly alarmed. Then a gun was fired, sounding at quite a distance. After a brief interval a second shot was fired.

"They're not shooting game," Lachapel told me. "They're telling us to signal our position."

He had several of the boatmen fire a volley and repeat after ten minutes. Soon after the second volley the men began to come in. They had been separated all day and had not come together until close to the river.

Richardson and Balise each had shot a deer. The others had prairie hens, and Belter had bagged a fine goose.

Lang, who had traveled farthest from the river, was positive he had seen a signal smoke. We posted guards that night, but when the morning broke and we saw the sun darkened by clouds of sand and found ourselves held to the bank by the force of the wind we discounted the smoke story. It was seven o'clock before the wind dropped and the air cleared. We were about to start and the men were stringing out along the shore with the cordelle when Long shouted—

"Some one's coming."

The *patron* eased his grip on the steering-oar and waited. There was but one man, and he was an Indian. He held up his hand with the palm toward us, and we signaled back that we were friends and for him to come on.

When he came down the bank we noticed his right eye was gone. A crow was sitting on his shoulder; and so stiff and immovable was the bird that I supposed it was a stuffed one until it flew into the air and lighted on the bank while the Indian approached the boat.

He rubbed his stomach, and we got him some meat, but for a hungry Indian he ate very little. After he had finished and had tossed some of the meat to the tame crow I gave him a small present of tobacco.

His bearing was unusually haughty, and he accepted the tobacco carelessly. He told me—

"Medicine Crow, of the Yankton Dakota, finds many snakes in his path."

In the Yankton dialect I said—

"Medicine Crow talks with the tongue of the Yankton, but he does not sound like my friends in that tribe."

And yet I could not have told wherein he spoke differently from the many Yankton warriors I had met.

"Are two leaves of a tree alike? Are two pieces of grass alike?" he haughtily demanded. "Do any two white men talk alike?"

"The Crow is very wise," I apologized. "He speaks of snakes?"

"They have heads like Arikara men. Medicine Crow will go with the good white men till they have passed the Arikara villages."

"How many snakes did my brother see?" I questioned, for I never could trust an Arikara, although Mr. Manuel got along smoothly enough with them.

"They passed in the night."

"Then how does my brother know they were Arikara? Did he hear their talk?"

He did not like my questions. Yet he turned and pointed toward the neck of land and the conical lodge, and explained:

"The father of Medicine Crow's friend died after carrying the pipe down the river

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two Winters ago. In passing the death lodge this morning Medicine Crow saw it had been broken into. The war-pipe the dead man was to smoke in the Land of Many Lodges is gone. Only the Arikara dogs would take it."

His presence on the boat would mean danger to us if any Arikaras saw him. And yet, did we refuse him safe passage up the river we would incur the enmity of his people, who gave us less trouble than any of the Sioux tribes.

I remembered how the mixed war-party had hung around Côte sans Dessein to murder one Osage boy, and I could visualize the persistence of the Arikaras in dogging us and our hunters for the privilege of lifting the medicine-man's scalp. I dared not refuse him sanctuary, however, and with a show of brotherly love I told him he was welcome and that we would do our best to convey him by the villages.

His small eyes seemed to widen as I talked, and there was no doubt about the new expression of his stern face as I finished. He stepped back from the boat and called to the tame crow. The bird cocked his head and hopped a few feet toward him, but seemed to distrust us white men.

The Indian hurried up the bank and clumsily swooped his hand. The bird fluttered farther away. We waited for him to secure his pet. He reached the top of the bank, talking in a low voice to the crow. Then suddenly he straightened and the bird lighted on his shoulder. Lifting an arm, he pointed down at us and hoarsely cried:

"Medicine Crow heard steps in the night and believed Arikaras were near. Now he knows a bad bird whispered in his ears. And the Yankton Sioux shall know the white stole from the dead."

With incredible swiftness he had flashed out a knife, and there came a glittering streak as the blade buried its point in the mast close to my head. The audacity and unexpectedness of the attempt to murder me held us stupefied for a few seconds, or long enough for him to dart away from the bank and from our sight. With yells of rage the hunters sprang ashore; but Balise, in the lead, slipped and fell and knocked the feet from under Richardson and Belter, who were at his heels. Recovering my wits, I leaped from the boat and with most imperative commands forbade the hunters from shooting the fellow.

By the time I poked my head above the bank the savage had disappeared in a growth of willows and cottonwood. The hunters swore mightily that they would have his hair, but I managed to hold them in check and get them back to the boat. As I was driving them aboard Lachapel caught my arm and pointed dramatically to the top of the cargo box and at a long calumet, decorated after the Sioux fashion.

Making sure that my control of the hunters was sufficent to hold them back from hunting the Indian out of the willows, I demanded to know where the pipe came from and who had brought it aboard. No one answered. The creoles stared at the pipe stupidly and rubbed their heads.

"It was not here when the Indian signaled us," muttered Lachapel. "Then, behold, it is here! And the Yanktons will be told that we broke into a death lodge and stole a dead man's pipe!"

Balise stepped forward and requested—"If *m'sieur* the *bourgeois* will permit."

Then without waiting for spoken permission he whirled about and thrust his scowling face close to the blank countenance of Le Fou and hissed:

"You worthless one! You stole that pipe from the burial lodge!"

"Mercy! Mercy, *m'sieur* my master!" howled the wretch, dropping to his knees and attempting to throw his arms around Balise' legs.

Balise kicked him away and repeated his accusation. Le Fou yelled in terror and brokenly confessed:

"I took it. It was pretty. A dead man couldn't use it. I brought it here to give to *m'sieur* my master."

Balise folded his arms and gave me a helpless look. At last he said:

"What can one do, *m'sieur?* He is a pig. He can not think. He meant no harm. Can we whip a fool? Or turn him adrift in this savage country? It is for *m'sieur* to say."

I could not impose any sentence on the unfortunate. I replied:

"It's unfortunate the fool had to parade the pipe where the Indian could see it. He'll not forgive us for that pipe; nor will the Yanktons."

Balise endeavored to make us feel better by promising:

"I know the affair can be mended after some fashion. Nothing is so bad it can't

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be mended. When we meet the medicine-man's tribe I will take this witless one to them and show them how a *wakan* has touched his poor head, and that only he is to blame for the theft of the pipe. We will take excellent care of the pipe and give it back to them."

Well, that was all we could do, as Medicine Crow had had time to steal away. Balise's plan was thoroughly sound, too, except we must be sure to see some of the leading men of the Yanktons before they could jump us from ambush.

His talk made us all feel better, and the matter was dropped. The pipe was carefully placed in the cargo box and Le Fou worked his hardest, sensing in a dull way that he had something to make up for.

When the men were sent ashore with the cordelle they appeared to be very nervous. Some of them were always glancing over their shoulders as if expecting to see a war party rushing to attack.

Before noon we saw a smoke and knew that some savage, doubtless Medicine Crow, was signaling that white men were to be had for the taking. The cordelle was abandoned, to the great relief of the creoles, as a light breeze sprang up.

That day the hunters ranged on the west side of the river. Le Fou remained in the black books of the entire outfit and was left entirely alone. Even Balise had no talk for him when we camped that night.

THERE followed several days of nervous watchfulness, and whenever we sighted the signal smokes abreast of us we kept the hunters on board unless in actual need of fresh meat. The creoles varied the fare by making fish-traps of willows and catching several big fish. In passing Soldier River we had to depend entirely on the cordelle, as the Missouri is very crooked at that section for several miles. We saw elk and put the hunters ashore, but they brought back no meat. Balise was gone so long that we feared he had been killed or captured.

Next day we had good water but a head wind, and were forced to cordelle nearly all the way to the mouth of the Little Sioux, yet making better than twenty miles because of the creoles' fear to loiter at their task. That night the bank under which we were camping fell in and smothered the boat with earth and nearly drowned me in the tiny cabin. The men ashore quickly righted matters, and as the cargo had not suffered any serious damage we shifted our camping-place in the darkness and counted it only as an incident. Owing to the delay in cleaning the boat and drying some of the cloth we made only fifteen miles, with poles and oars, and camped at Blackbird Hill.

This bluff has been a notable landmark on the upper river ever since the death of Blackbird, the celebrated chief of the Omahas, in 1803. He ruled his people ruthlessly and murdered all who threatened to become his rivals for leadership. When he died he was buried sitting on his favorite war pony.

The burial mound on top of the bluff was conspicuous to those ascending the river, and the grave was held in superstitous awe by Indians and boatmen. The chief selected the spot and the manner of interment so that his spirit eyes might watch the traders coming up the river. And somehow, whenever passing or camping near the bluff, I had the feeling of being scrutinized by a ghost.

In the morning we had the misfortune to break the steering-oar and were delayed until the *patron* could finish shaping a new one. Balise and Richardson went ashore to hunt, but soon came running back to us with a dozen naked savages in pursuit. I brought up my blunderbuss, and Lachapel procured his from the stern and gave orders for the men to seize weapons and line the bank. The hunters were the first ashore. Balise commenced yelling:

"Sioux! They have given their clothes to their medicine!"

Only a war party that has been frustrated or defeated "gives" its clothes to the medicine—which means they have vowed to kill the first strangers they meet. It is the Arikara custom of the individual "casting" his robe multiplied as many times as there are men in the desperate band.

Our numbers and our warlike bearing caused the savages to slow down to a walk, and to come to a halt when within long rifle-shot. Even a very desperate man who has given his clothes to the medicine will find a string hitched to his bow when facing discouraging odds.

The leader of the party dropped his bow and arrows and lifted his open hands. I stepped ahead of my line of men and returned the amicable gesture. The red man

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advanced until within easy talking distance and called out—

"Why do our white brothers run when we come to talk with them?" He was referring to the flight of Balise and Richardson.

"Why do the Sioux go without clothes, yet carry their war-clubs and bows?" I retorted.

"We are hunting for some bad Arikaras, who stole our horses. We give our robes and leggings to our medicine so we may find them. We will not hurt the white men."

I was positive they would suffer the most if they attacked us, and this conviction did not hinge on any hope of help from the *voyageurs*. With much gravity I retorted:

"Brothers should not stand far apart. Let the Sioux warriors come on the big canoe and have some *mini wakan*.* We have heard bad words about the Sioux, that they do not want American traders to come up the river."

"A lying spirit whispered it. The men of the Two Kettles band do not hurt white men."

The Two Kettles Sioux, or Oohenonpa, was a division of the Tetons, but less hostile to whites than the other Teton tribes. They were good hunters and shrewd traders. I was surprized that they had given their clothing and knew that the cause must be a strong one.

I repeated my invitation, and after a brief conference the warriors slowly advanced, carrying their weapons. I made no objection to their arms, for we were twenty-eight men and well armed. The blunderbusses alone at close range would have annihilated several of them.

Diluting some whisky, I gave each warrior a small dram and inquired for Mr. Manuel, who was well known to all the tribes. They said that they had talked with Mr. Manuel and that he was to build a post above the three Arikara villages and trade with all the tribes.

They declared the Arikaras would steal his horses and goods and murder his men. I assured the leader that we would urge Mr. Manuel to move his post into the heart of the Sioux country, where he would be safe. I then examined into their reason for giving their clothes.

The leader, warmed by his drink, explained—

"Medicine Crow, of the Yanktons, told us some Arikaras had stolen a pipe from the death lodge of Black Eagle, once the war chief of the Two Kettles band."

This speech proved both the speaker and Medicine Crow to be liars. Medicine Crow had told them my outfit stole the pipe, and they were intent on killing my hunters until discovering our numbers. Medicine Crow had told me that the pipe came from the death lodge of a Yankton warrior. This was false, as the Two Kettles band's readiness to fight proved that one of their kinsmen was the occupant of the conical lodge. Therefore Medicine Crow had lied maliciously; this man now talking with me had lied as a matter of expediency.

Turning to Balise, I said:

"Tell them the truth. They believe what the Crow told them—that we took the pipe. They don't dare admit it for fear of starting a fight."

"Once in a while the truth is best even with savages, *m'sieur*," he quietly replied; and he ordered Le Fou to step forward.

Then he took him by the hand and led him among our visitors, explaining that the fellow was *wakan* and under the protection of a big medicine. Le Fou was sufficiently idiotic in appearance and behavior to be accepted as a crazy man, and the Indians made room for him and eyed him in awe.

Having fully established the half-wit's status, Balise bluntly said that Le Fou took the pipe, thinking he heard a mighty medicine tell him to do it. He explained how we had kept the pipe, hoping to meet with some kith of the dead man, when we could return it.

Then he brought the pipe from the cargo box and presented it to the leader. They seemed to be perfectly satisfied with Balise's explanation and showed no resentment against Le Fou.

I told them: "This Medicine Crow is a liar. He told us a Yankton warrior sleeps in the elkskin lodge. He told us that he himself was of the End Village.* He lied. He speaks the tongue of the *ihanke tonwan*, but he is not of it. Who is he?"

Our visitors cast veiled glances at each other and began slowly to withdraw. The leader replied:

"He is a very big medicine-man. He has been away for many moons. Some forget how he looked before he went away. He is very *wakan*."

*Whisky.

*Yankton.

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And their withdrawal became more rapid and ended with a sudden dash for some little willows fringing a small creek. To Balise I said:

"Medicine Crow is stirring up mischief. I'd give half a season's pay to know who he really is, and who is behind him. Some British agent would be a close guess."

"Alas, *m'sieur*, they are all such liars! Who can we believe if his skin is red?" he sighed.

I entertained no illusions as to our late visitors. Driven into a frenzy of rage by the story of Medicine Crow, they would have murdered us to a man had we not greatly outnumbered them and thus would have retrieved their robes and leggings. Yet our explanation had satisfied them, I was sure; and I did not believe they would trouble us again. Richardson spoke a great deal of wisdom when with an oath he declared—

"Worst job we ever done was to let that cuss with the tame crow git off alive."

After the naked warriors were out of sight we discovered that the tomcat had disappeared. We knew the cat was in the cargo box with the female and the kittens when the savages first showed up. The red rascals, without any clothing to conceal their stealings, had managed to appropriate the cat under our noses.

THE creoles needed no urging to make every endeavor to get away from that locality, but because of trying to pass through a new channel it was not until two days of much rowing that we reached the Omaha River. We ate our dinner on a sand-bar. Three miles up the river was the village of the Omahas, some three thousand souls; and as Mr. Manuel the season before had been compelled to pass without paying his respects to Big Elk, the famous chief, I deemed it wise to repair what the chief must have considered to be a great discourtesy. But a stretch of swamp and the exigence of my business prevented the side-trip.

A few miles above the mouth of the Omaha we came upon three hunters of that nation, and I went ashore to have a talk with them. The Omahas were always very friendly to the whites. They were not entirely dependent on hunting and did considerable farming in corn, melons, beans and squashes.

They were very partial to Mr. Manuel as he introduced among them the seed of the large pumpkin, from which they raised enormous fruit. He also supplied them with the large bean, the turnip and the potato.

The hunters told me that several tribes of the Sioux were massed up the river and would surely attack us. They added that these hostiles were much under the influence of Hudson's Bay Company traders as well as of men working for the Northwest Company. I could believe this readily enough, but I was mystified when they proceeded to announce that one who spoke for the Master of Life was appearing to the Indians and exhorting them to kill all Americans. I asked who this sower of discord was, but they could only say they had heard him spoken of as the Light.

Their fear in mentioning him even thus ambiguously was genuine. Indubitably they considered the newcomer to possess supernatural powers.

They insisted that in his abrupt appearance in a village he was like a ghost. No one saw him till he was standing inside a council circle. His departure always was as baffling.

Let a story get started among the red men, especially if it smacks of the supernormal, and its most absurd phases are eagerly believed. I had talked with men who had fought against Pontiac and who had told me much of how that great leader had gained followers by arousing their fears. What the hunters told me was not news for my creoles to hear; but I took the first opportunity to pass it on to my hunters.

"Some Indian has made them believe he has a medicine that will kill all the white people," murmured Balise.

"He's fetched them a new dance and some new medicine and worked a new bag of tricks," snorted Richardson in disgust. "Nothing like lead pills to break up that sickness."

That afternoon we made Floyd's River, named after Sergeant Charles Floyd, a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the first United State soldier to die west of the Mississippi. He had died near the mouth of the creek and was buried on the bluffs.

The current was sluggish, and the *patron* decided to push on between the low banks. There was a scattering of small trees along the shores, but otherwise the country was

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bare and would have been monotonous if it had not been for its immensity.

We passed the Sun and the Big Sioux Rivers and camped, having made about twenty miles for the day. This was well above the average, which was anywhere from twelve to fifteen miles a day.

Our camp was a short distance above the Big Sioux and under some high clay bluffs. We had all but gained the shore when Lang went overboard and surely would have been swept away in the gathering dusk, for the current was very swift, had he not happened to seize the steering-oar. Lachapel got him aboard almost before the rest of us realized what had happened.

After he had coughed and spluttered for a while he began cursing most violently. I was used to river profanity, but there was a venom in his outburst that disturbed me.

I called on him to cease blaspheming, and he whirled upon me and for a moment I believed he had gone mad. With a mighty effort he controlled himself. I set it down to temporary insanity, due to the shock of his narrow escape. But once the boat had tied up and I was wandering up the bank alone he stepped from some willows and accosted me.

"I have something to say, *bourgeois*," he muttered, glancing about to make sure that no one was within hearing.

Expecting him to announce his intention of leaving the outfit because I had spoken sharply to him before his mates, I said nothing. He surprized me by asking—

"Did you see me fall into the river?"

"I can't say that I did. You were standing as if ready to leap ashore, and the next minute you were gone," I replied.

"Richardson saw me when I went overboard," he murmured. "He says it looked like I'd jumped in."

"Don't mind what Richardson says. He'd have felt badly if you'd been drowned. But now you're safe he'll try to make a joke of it."

"Richardson feels mighty bad as it is," he startled me by saying.

"What are you trying to tell me? Your talk sounds like a foolish man's."

"Richardson has felt mighty well cut up since I told him."

I began to realize that the fellow had something unusual to relate.

"Go ahead," I encouraged him.

Drawing a deep breath, he stepped closer and murmured:

"It do look like I'd jumped in—and for why? Because some one, —— him, gave me a mighty big push right 'tween the shoulders!"

"Some one bumped into you and——"

"No!" he snarled. "There wasn't any one near enough to even crowd against me. I tell you I know the feel of a man's paw when it's punching into my old carcass. I know when a man's paw means mischief. I tell you some one wanted me in the river when it's dark and the water's mighty swift. Some one wanted me there when there wa'n't no chance for any of the men to see me and lend a hand. I'd been rolled under and drowned if my paw hadn't 'a' happened to strike ag'in' that stearing-oar!"

This was a monstrous thing for him to say and for me to believe. I questioned him sharply as to who stood nearest him; so far as he knew only the *bosseman* and he were standing side by side, a few feet apart. He had no idea as to who stood behind him.

I tried to reconstruct the scene when he went overboard, but remembered only that I was in the stern with the *patron*. It was dusk, and the men were staring at the shore, anxious to get the kettles to boiling.

"What you say must be impossible," I weakly began; but he cut me short by emphatically insisting:

"I was pushed into the river a-purpose. There's a murderer on the boat."

"Ridiculous!"

"A murderer who's already done for one man—poor James. There was the tunk on top of his head what was never explained."

"Man, are you crazy? Didn't we agree a wandering Arikara——"

"For want of something better we tried to make ourselves think that. It wa'n't no Arikara. He was hit on the head while he was snoozing near the rail. Mebbe he was hit quite a bit afore he went into the water. He never knew what hit him. When the men was jumping around to git their poles the murderer g'in him a push with his foot and sent him overboard. He was dead already before he hit the water."

"Good God, man! If the creoles learn what you've said they'll steal the boat while we sleep and make off down the river!" I gasped.

"That's why I scouted through the willers to speak with you up here alone. They

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won't know from me, nor my friends. But you oughter know. We fellers have been talking it over, and we've gone over the crew, man by man. We know most of the creoles. Them of them that one man can't vouch for another feller can. We've just about made up our minds as to the skunk that done for James and tried to do for me."

"What do you plan doing next?" I asked, instead of hastening the horrid disclosure.

"Lay a trap and catch him at his bloody work, and then leave him the same as a Teton would leave him."

My throat was dry; for I knew the hunters could not be stopped. It had to be asked, and I whispered—

"Whom do you suspect?"

He brought his lips close to my ear and astounded me by saying—

"Le Fou!"

The charge seemed so preposterous that reaction set in after a few moments and I laughed in huge relief. Lang was patient enough now, and waited until I had finished. Then he insisted—

"Le Fou is the one man we can't give a clean slate to."

"But he's a simpleton," I scoffed.

"Ah, is he? He can work well enough when he wants to."

"But why don't you name Balise? He's as much of a stranger as Le Fou; and he has all his wits."

"He was standing by your side when James went overboard. He was standing by Belter's side when I went overboard."

This was an excellent alibi for Balise, yet scarcely enough to convict the half-wit, even did we all believe that James was murdered and that an attempt had been made on Lang. I argued:

"But the wound on James' head may have been made by the river. Or by the prowling Indian who shot at me. And you may be mistaken when you say you were deliberately pushed. One of the creoles may have stumbled against you by accident. He'd be afraid to admit as much."

He shook his head stubbornly and persisted:

"I know the difference between being bumped or crowded, and being pushed a-purpose. The paw that dug into my back didn't strike. It pushed and shoved even when I tried to hold back. As to that prowling Injun you think shot a arrer at you—you never saw him."

This quite swept me off my feet. "But the arrow? I surely saw that," I reminded him.

"But not who shot it. None of the boys could find any Injun signs. How do you know some one didn't trail you, find the bow and arrers and use one? That would 'a' made us think some Injun did it."

"Meaning it might have been Le Fou who shot the arrow at me?"

"Just that, and nothing more."

"Then look you," I triumphantly began. "After I left the deserted post I heard Balise abusing Le Fou. When I returned with you hunters Le Fou had as many poles as any man. Come, Lang, be sensible."

"You heard Balise, but you didn't see him. And you didn't see Le Fou cutting any poles. How do you know he cut the poles that he fetched back to the boat?"

"——, man! This is going too far. Now you're accusing Balise. For if Le Fou wasn't in the woods cutting poles while Balise was calling him a pig and telling him to work faster, then Balise must have cut the poles, knowing Le Fou was about to kill me. This talk is a bad business. It's done lots of harm to you hunters and to me.

"Now you've been thinking such thoughts I can't expect you fellows to forget them. But I insist you keep your mouths shut and not breathe a word of this or let any one suspect what you're thinking."

"I'm showing you I can 'splain away things as fast as you can," he angrily retorted. "As for Balise, who knows anything about him, or why he's up the river? By his own tell he's been a bloody cuss. Stories that would curl your hair. He don't make no bones about telling the men he's fit with and killed. Seems to think it's a mighty good joke. Le Fou acts sensible enough when his boss is round and tells him to."

I was dazed. Without warning I was being plunged into a horrible mess of suspicions. Even if I satisfied myself beyond the shadow of a doubt that Lang's accusations were absurd, yet there would always remain in the background of my mind the memory of his charges. I no longer would be able to judge the fool's bearing justly. When he appeared as the imbecile I would be wondering if he was play-acting; when he responded to Balise's influence I would be asking myself what unholy alliance was between the two.

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Motioning for Lang to hold his tongue for a bit, I concentrated on the problem and finally said:

"I want you men to keep this matter to yourselves. I know you'll do that. But I want you to act as if you never had had these thoughts. Soon we'll be up with Mr. Manuel, and he can settle the whole business."

"The boys are mighty well stirred up about it," Lang insisted. "We'll set a trap. 'Less the right man walks into it no one'll ever know any traps there, except as you know what I've said to you."

"We must be going back, or they'll be wondering what's keeping us. Try and act as natural as usual with Le Fou and Balise."

"Don't you fret 'bout me sp'lling my own game," he grimly assured. "Now you know why I let loose and ripped out so when I was fished out the river. I was crazy to find the man who pushed me overboard. But I'll Injun him, don't you fret."

WE STROLLED back to the boat and the fires, talking game and river stuff; and although the hunters knew that I knew, none of them betrayed his knowledge by so much as a glance. Balise was entertaining them with a story over which they were cracking smiles. Lachapel was sitting apart, down-stream from the fire, smoking his pipe and staring at the dark current. I joined him and we talked of the river for some minutes. At last I cautiously asked—

"How's Le Fou doing?"

"All right when he ain't stealing Sioux pipes from death-lodges and fetching a band of savages down on us," he grunted.

"He cut poles with the best of them at Papillon Creek," I reminded him.

"Yes. If he didn't steal what some one else cut," he grumbled.

"You're displeased with the poor fellow because of that pipe. It's hard for you to do him justice. You saw him cut the poles even if Balise did drive him to it," I said with a laugh.

Lachapel growled under his breath and corrected me:

"I saw him go into the growth with Balise, and I called after him he could get plenty of poles nearer the shore. After they got out of sight maybe Balise helped him cut them. The upper Missouri ain't any place for a half-wit. I wish now I'd put him ashore when you advised it."

Because he knew nothing of what Lang had told me I found his talk all the more disquieting. I walked to the kettles and secured some meat and ate it in the bow of the boat where I could be alone. I was remembering the theft of the goods at the mouth of the Gasconade, when the men traded with the settler for whisky.

Le Fou was in charge of the goods when I broke up the trade. I was now wondering if he had been the thief. None of the men would hold it against him, let alone betray him, if he stole from the company for the sake of standing a treat. But if he had brains enough to be such a cunning thief he might know enough to be worse.

Lachapel's words rang through my mind about his stealing the pipe and drawing the savages down on us. But there was no sense in attributing any sinister purpose to that theft. If he brought danger to us he also shared in that danger. And only a fool would have displayed the pipe while the medicine-man was present. It was just as I had expected—odds and ends of incidents, each bringing danger or inconvenience to us, and each connected up in some fashion with the bandy-legged natural, were racing through my mind. I vowed I would not lose my official poise, yet instantly began suspecting Le Fou of any and every thing.

Disgusted at my bias, I finished my supper and made up an old Indian path leading to the top of the bluff. It did not seem as if I could think clearly so long as the creoles' laughter was ringing in my ears, punctuated by the sudden guffaws of the four Americans as Balise scored some witty point.

I slowly mounted the crooked path, gradually leaving the boat and the fires in a well of darkness. There yet was some light on the heights, and I walked perilously close to the clay wall and stared out on the vague landscape. Had it been a few hours earlier I could have looked up and down the river for miles.

Once more I pondered over the emptiness of the mighty country and wondered at the purpose behind such an absence of life in such regal domains. Surely it was not intended that such a magnificent land should be for all time set apart for the support of a race of hunters, with each savage requiring

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for his subsistence enough of hill and prairie country to contain a thriving city.

My hat left my head, and for a second I feared I was to topple over. I managed to stagger back from the brink and whirled about to meet my assailant. It had darkened rapidly, and I could see no one.

I ran some distance back from the bluff and attempted to bring my enemy against the skyline. This maneuver, too, was fruitless. Then, berating myself for not returning at once to camp, I found the path and began descending to the boat.

Half-way down the winding trail I encountered several men coming up. I hailed them, and Balise's voice answered:

"Death of my life! It's *m'sieur* himself!"

"Who should it be?" I asked, yet puzzled as to why they should have taken alarm at my absence.

"Your ghost, *m'sieur*, when your hat comes sailing down from the cliff and strikes near us and spoils one of my droll stories," retorted Balise.

"A night bird flew close to my head and startled me. I dropped the hat," I explained.

"You didn't happen to drop the head of Sioux war-club at the same time, did you?" innocently asked Lang.

"A club, *m'sieur?* This is the first I have heard about it," said Balise to Lang.

"I picked it up a short distance beyond the hat," explained Lang. "Ain't had time to tell of it till now."

"I don't know what you fellows are talking about. I lost my hat. Lang finds the head of a club. Search the river-bank and you probably can find a dozen broken and discarded clubs."

"S'pose we git back to the fire," growled Richardson.

No more was said until we reached the bank. The creoles had retreated to the boat as if afraid of the cliff. Richardson picked up my hat from beside the fire and handed it to me. It had dropped down like some wounded bird.

No one besides Lang had seen the head of the club, which had been found some distance from the hat. Lang handed me the weapon. It was broken off short from the handle and had two blades and a point so that it might be used for cutting or thrusting after the fashion of Sioux clubs.

I could not identify it. I had been conscious only of my hat being violently brushed from my head. Nothing had hit my head, and there was no proof that the club came from the top of the cliff.

Up and down the whole length of the Missouri were scattered portions of broken weapons. The red man often could more easily make a new weapon than he could repair a damaged one. Ax and club-heads almost were as common as were the arrowheads in the old days in Virginia and Kentucky, when the settlers accepted them as an inexhaustible source of rifle-flints.

I made light of the whole affair and gave orders for all to turn in. As the men were preparing for the night Lang, in passing, paused and whispered:

"One of us will be awake all night. Only Americans on guard."

"Was he absent from camp?" I asked.

"We don't know. We was playing Injun so's Balise wouldn't guess we was thinking things. Got him to telling stories. Then we got to laughing fit to bust. Don't one of us remember nothing about him, or of giving him a thought till some time just 'fore we started to climb the bluffs and find you. Then I did git my wits back, and seen him sprawled out alongside the boat."

He moved on, stepping as noiselessly as an Indian; and somehow I slept the sounder for knowing that the Americans would take turns in standing watch.

THE morning found the river rising, and for the next four days we traveled against a strong current with nothing out of the ordinary happening. The hunters now began bringing in much buffalo. The four Americans, I observed, always returned to the camp in pairs, and, I assumed, hunted in pairs. Balise would come in with one couple or the other, or alone.

We passed the Little Bow and the river Jacques and knew we had reached the Ponca country. One of the nation visited our camp at night and told us that all the nations above, with the exception of the Arikaras and the Mandans, were eager to fight the Americans. He said the Arikaras would join the hostile tribes if the Sioux could induce or compel the Minnetarees to cease raiding their villages.

As we were near a Ponca village he urged us to push on and camp there. But the

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Poncas, while always friendly to the whites, were great beggars, and we had no desire to give away our goods, or constantly be refusing their pleas for gifts.

The creoles learned what the man had said about the tribes waiting to kill us and were much afraid. They were greatly alarmed next morning when Le Nez, a Sioux chief, hailed us from the shore and asked us to tie up. But the chief had only three lodges with him and appeared well disposed.

We landed, and I traded for thirty-two beaver, three otter, some robes and a dozen bladders of tallow. He had three hundred pounds of dried meat which he wanted me to trade for; but I lied to him and told him our cargo box was full, and advised him to take it up the river to Mr. Manuel. The meat was a good staple to trade for, and large quantities of it and buffalo tongues were going down to St. Louis in increasing quantities each season. But if the trade would bring him into friendly relations with Mr. Manuel he would be one chief who would refuse to take the path against us. He had plenty of horses and promised to start that day to find my employer.

We took in two Sioux belonging to the White River band, and they traveled with us the rest of the day and well into the next morning. Shortly after they left us we came to the camp of the Sleeper, a mystery man of the Teton Dakota. He had twenty men with him, but no women or children. Yet if he was returning from a path he had no scalps to show for it.

I had met him on two previous trips and knew him to be a master-hand at spying. He would wander to a village of an enemy tribe and pretend to be starving and to have been outlawed by his people. He would be fed and made a member of the tribe, and as soon as he had learned the exact strength he would disappear and carry the information back to his people. He boasted to Mr. Manuel in my hearing of having ventured far north to the heads of the Mississippi and to have been the guest of the great Tecumseh.

His present band had no meat to speak of, and I did not believe it was a hunting-party. Doubtless he was setting forth on one of his spying trips and would leave his twenty men a few miles from the village he planned to fool.

He had nothing to trade but insisted we camp with him. The warmth of his welcome could be traced to the large quantities of buffalo meat our hunters brought in that afternoon.

It was four o'clock when we came upon the camp, and if it had not been for giving offense we would have pushed on for a few hours longer. As it was I deemed it best to tie up.

We scarcely had made the boat secure before a huge buffalo bull, a majestic creature, appeared on the edge of the low cliff close by the camp and stared down on us, or on the river. Richardson, Lang and Belter all fired together, and the noble brute came flying through the air like some huge dragon. Each hunter claimed to have fired the mortal shot; but it is my opinion that none of the three bullets would have been fatal had not the animal been stung into losing his self-possession and falling from the cliff.

It was big medicine to the Sleeper, however. He was believed to possess certain occult powers and requested the gift of the shaggy head to preserve in the medicine way. We made him a present of the shattered remains, and his men were hugely pleased.

The Sioux had their kettles boiling when we made the landing. I talked with the chief while the men were cutting up the huge carcass for the morning kettles. While we were conversing and he was vowing the eternal friendship of all the Sioux tribes for the Americans I noticed one of the few dogs stealing a chunk of meat. He was very sly and very cunning and the red-smeared butchers would not have detected him if he had not commenced acting in a peculiar manner. His behavior held my attention as well as that of the Indians.

The Sleeper and I went closer to investigate. The poor cur had a piece of bull meat gripped between his teeth and was suffering intensely. His rounded sides told of his having gobbled down a pound or two of the meat before he was stricken. As I stared at him I entertained a horrible suspicion.

To the Sleeper I said:

"Something tells me this buffalo bull was a medicine animal and is not to be eaten. The dog is very sick from eating it. Before any of my Sioux brothers eat it let us make sure. Cut off a piece of meat and give it to another dog."

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The Sleeper smoked his knife over a grass fire on the chance that my surmise the bull was medicine was correct and then sliced off some of the meat and tossed it to a half-starved cur. In a short time this dog was displaying the same symptoms as the first.

I called up the creoles and directed them to throw all the meat into the river and to wash their hands carefully afterward. Then I promised the chief that my hunters would furnish him with meat on the morrow that wasn't medicine. I went back to the boat in a very serious frame of mind.

I got Richardson aside and asked him pointblank if he, or any of his companions, was planning any mischief to our red neighbors. He shook his head blankly and replied—

"If we was up to a game why did we give 'em all that big critter?"

"You didn't see what happened a bit ago, when the bull meat was thrown into the river?"

"Thrown into the river? All that meat? Good ——! Injuns git so fussy they must have cows?" he rumbled angrily. "Lucky me 'n' the boys was out of sight, sort of talking things over! If we'd seen 'em heaving that meat into the river they'd heard some talk! Let the varmints go hungry. The bull would 'a' been tough, but after falling and smashing hisself up he oughter 'a' been tender enough for a Injun."

"I gave the order for the meat to be thrown away."

He stared at me in deep bewilderment, then shrugged his massive shoulders and curtly said—

"You're the *bourgeois*."

"A dog ate some of the meat first and was made very sick and died. A second dog was fed some of the meat, and died like the first."

His scowl deepened, and he growled—

"Look here, Mandan Ramsay, what 'n —— you trying to git at?"

"Only this: After the bull was butchered the meat was poisoned with arsenic. If you'd seen the two dogs you wouldn't need to be told. We both have been in the fur trade long enough to know how arsenic works."

For a minute he seemed to be stunned; then he gritted his teeth and mumbled fierce oaths. Yet he said nothing; that is, he made no coherent talk to me. But perhaps he said volumes when he slowly turned his head and shot his gaze about until it had located Le Fou.

The half-wit was amusing several grim-faced savages by giving a burlesque of hunting. He had a bow made of a willow twig and another twig for an arrow. The Indians were greatly edified by the foolishness of it, and under different circumstances I should have enjoyed it. For there was real artistry in his silliness as he crawled through the thin grass and stalked imaginary game right under his nose and then pretended to despatch it with his ridiculous weapon.

As we watched him Balise strode forward and paused to smile on the nonsense. Then he addressed the spectators, and by the spiral line he traced with one finger above his head I knew he was telling the Sioux that Le Fou was very *wakan* and under the protection of all the red gods.

CHAPTER V

WE LOSE TWO MEN

WHEN we turned out next morning the Sleeper and his followers were packed and on the point of departing. That he should steal away without waiting for meat or gifts was entirely contrary to what I had expected. Before I could go to him and demand an explanation he came to me and said:

"This is a medicine place. We go back to the medicine lodge to give the pipe to the buffalo medicine so the buffalo will not run away from us. Something very bad has made the buffalo medicine angry. The bull the white men shot was a medicine bull."

In other words he was blaming my hunters for slaying the bull. Before I could think up a defense—for I could not tell him some one had put the white man's poison on the meat—he was saying:

"My young men are afraid of this place. They say the buffalo medicine is angry because the white traders come up the river."

"The Sleeper is their father. He knows they talk like children," I replied.

"This is a mystery place, and neither red man nor white man is wanted here. The earth, the fire, the wind and the water medicines are telling us to go away. The

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medicine bull was not angry because my hunters shot him; for he killed two dogs instead of men.

"I shall take my men away at once and go to find Manuel Lisa. If the Sleeper will send a young man to Lisa with a talk from me he shall receive a present worth a good buffalo-pony."

"Give me the talk. It shall go faster than the big canoe," he readily assured me.

While I did not place too much dependence on his messenger getting through to Mr. Manuel ahead of me, I secured a piece of paper and wrote on it

War has been declared

and signed my name and gave the location of my camp. The Sleeper's men were now in motion, strung out in a long line; and, taking the paper, he mounted his pony and galloped after them.

I hastened to the camp and sought Le Fou. He was not among the creoles on shore, nor on the boat. I drew Richardson aside and directed him to scout up the bank while I looked down-stream. I found no trace of Le Fou; and when the hunter and I met at the boat he shook his head.

I assembled the outfit and baldly announced:

"Some one on this boat poisoned the buffalo meat in the Indian camp last night. If an Indian had eaten it and died the Teton Dakota would have sealed the river to all Americans. If possible I will find that man who would turn the upper tribes against us. You will all line up on the shore while the *patron* and I make a search of the boat."

Creoles and hunters, with the exception of Richardson, appeared to be astounded. Without a word they fell into line. Balise broke the silence by suggesting:

"If one of us has any poison he will have it on his person, so he can easily throw it away. Let us all be searched before we search the boat. Let me be the first; then I will help search the others."

He advanced to me and held up his arms. I took him at his word and searched him so thoroughly that he murmured—

"It is almost as if *m'sieur* thought to find the poison on me."

"You would have no poison on you," I replied. "But all must be treated alike."

"The *bosseman*, the *patron*, the *bourgeois?*" he asked.

He meant it for insolence, although his lean face was innocent enough; and yet he was taking me at my word. I promptly replied:

"By all means. And you shall help. Leme, step here."

The *bosseman* came forward, and the two of us went through his scanty clothing. Lachapel came up without being called and submitted. Then I requested him and Balise to search me. For a few moments I feared that by some trickery the arsenic had been dropped in one of my pockets, and I felt a genuine relief when the two had finished.

Next we searched Richardson, who smiled viciously at Balise as we pawed over his huge person. After the hunters had been accounted for we began on the creoles, Richardson taking care to help Balise. Suddenly one of the boatmen yelped—

"*Où est Le Fou?*"

Where, indeed! I would have given a pack of prime beaver to know, and several packs to get my hands on him. The hunter smiled grimly after the men had shouted and called with no result.

"It's queer he should go away and leave you," I told Balise.

He shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"It would be queer if he were not Le Fou. He went to sleep last night while I was smoking. He must have got up before I was awake. I have tried to lose him several times, but he always caught up with me. He must be close at hand, *m'sieur.*"

"Prob'ly he's wandered off to find another dead man's pipe so's to make us more trouble," growled Belter.

"Have pity for the unfortunate, *m'sieur*, even as you may need pity yourself some time," gravely said Balise. "He is near by. He will hear my voice and come in."

And he raised his powerful voice in a melodious call that sounded like the notes of a bugle. Up and down the river he faced and sent forth his summons; but Le Fou did not answer, nor did he show himself. After some minutes Balise frowned and said to me:

"*M'sieur* the *bourgeois*, some evil has happened to the pig. I will go and look for him."

"The boat can not wait," I replied, my mind filled with ugly suspicions. "We start at once."

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"But, *m'sieur*," he begged, "you would not leave a man in this dangerous country. His hair would smoke in a lodge inside of two days."

"He is *wakan*," I reminded Balise. "You have already explained that to the Sioux who gave their clothes to their medicine, to Medicine Crow, the one-eyed, and to the Sleeper's band. He is far safer than any of the rest of us would be. You can hunt for him along this side of the river and join the boat tonight. But there can be no waiting here."

I nodded to the *patron*, who began giving his orders for an immediate departure. Balise, his face expressionless, picked up his long rifle, tucked some strips of dried meat in his pocket and strode back from the river and along the trail left by the Sleeper's band.

As the men had been thoroughly searched and as they possessed but little more than the clothes they wore, our hunt for the arsenic on the boat was quickly concluded. Richardson whispered to me:

"Mandan Ramsay, if any arsenic came up the river with us the witless one brought it. It was he who used it last night on the bull meat. And he's gone and taken it with him. It would be worth several packs of furs if he could catch a bullet."

"Then do you and Belter stay ashore and look for him," I ordered. "I'll keep Lang and Long aboard to help if we're attacked."

The two hunters started off, and the dejected crew once more renewed the old feud between them and the rushing river. We had a head wind and strong current, and the work was hard. By midday we were glad to halt on a sand-bar and eat.

While there an Omaha came out in a canoe and told me he was sent by the "big hunter," who had promised him a drink of rum if he delivered a talk. I knew he must mean Richardson. I gave him a dram and promised him another after he finished the talk.

With fragments of French mixed through his speech the Omaha gave me to understand that Richardson had seen or heard enough to believe that Medicine Crow, the one-eyed mystery man, and Le Fou were traveling together. This was sinister news, and I would have given a pack of beaver to have Richardson's exact words. I could not decide from the man's talk whether Richardson meant Le Fou and Medicine Crow were traveling with Sleeper's band, or were alone. When I attempted to cross-examine the fellow he became so anxious for the second drink that he said, "Yes" to everything.

I scarcely believed that the two men were traveling alone, as in that event Richardson would have captured Le Fou and brought him back to the boat. Nor could I determine from the talk whether Richardson had seen the two together, or had been told by some Indian that they were traveling in company.

We made eighteen miles that day, and early in the morning Richardson and Belter found us. They had secured their information about Le Fou from the Sleeper's band. Le Fou, after giving his pantomime of hunting, had spent the night in the Sleeper's camp and had robed himself like an Indian and had ridden away before my eyes even while the Sleeper was bidding me good-by. The band was very anxious to have him live with them, but after they had covered a few miles Medicine Crow had joined them and had had a talk with the half-wit, and had induced him to leave the band and gallop on ahead.

"If I'd got an eye on that skunk I'd 'a' plugged him, Mandan," Richardson declared with profane emphasis. "He was up to some game. He was smart enough to tog up like a Injun and git clear of us right under our noses. No question but what he pizened the bull meat. And the —— of it is, he must be packing some more of the pizen around with him."

"The man is crazy and has a mania for murder," I decided, wondering what deviltry he would raise if he was carrying arsenic with him. "But how could he understand Medicine Crow? And are you sure it was Medicine Crow that got him to leave the Sleeper?"

"Sure as the Missouri is muddy. Sleeper hisself told me 'bout the tame crow riding on the strange Injun's shoulder. What's more, the Sleeper and all his men are scared of him. They think he's a mighty strong mystery man. As to the fool's understanding the Crow, I figger he ain't such a fool as we've thought him."

"He's crazy," I persisted, not knowing what to think if I ceased believing this.

"Then his boss, that Balise, must know all about his liking to push folks into the

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river and use pizen," growled Richardson. "And it's queer where he went to after quitting the camp. We never see hide nor hair of him."

"He may come in any time," I replied.

But Balise did not show up. Vainly we fired guns to guide him and sent men along the highest points of the west bank to signal him. Our business would not permit of further delay, and once more we were in motion. I was convinced that Balise, a veteran hunter, could join us any time he wished, and that his failure to do so proved him to be a captive or dead or a deserter.

We made twenty-five miles that day by sailing and passed the Iowa. There followed ten days of back-breaking work, but fortunately devoid of accidents. Balise did not return, and we gave up all expectations of seeing him again.

We met with no serious delays until we broke our rudder near Bonhomme Island, where we camped and made a new rudder out of fine cedar. I ordered the hunters to keep close to the river, but even so they managed to shoot two elk and we fared sumptuously.

Lewis and Clark have written of the ancient fortifications on this island, but I could find only sand ridges formed by the river, where the low banks had been overflowed. These ridges, very regular in formation, do give the appearance of old earthworks, but the Missouri and not red men built them.

While passing White Lime and White Paint Creeks we saw several smokes on both sides and far back from the river. Our hunters climbed the bluffs but could see no villages. As the smokes seemed to be following us we decided that spies were reporting our progress.

The night we camped at L'Eau qui Court (Niobrara) we were fired upon from the west bank, but no harm was done. The shots came in a scattering volley—ten or a dozen guns, Richardson estimated. As the firing ceased, as we supposed, there came a single shot that brought us to our toes.

TO BE CONTINUED

"WILD BILL'S" NAME

by Edwin L. Sabin

JAMES BUTLER HICKOK, better known as "Wild Bill," the noted plains scout, peace officer and expert revolver-shot, during his first years upon the frontier was dubbed "Shanghai Bill." This sobriquet was given him by the Jim Lane Free Soil battalion of "Red Legs" which Jim, then eighteen and tall and slim, joined in 1855 at Leavenworth, Kansas.

But in December, 1860, at the stage station of Rock Creek, some fifty miles west of Topeka, Hickok as station-keeper had his ferocious fight with the McCandlas outlaws. The ten men battered in the door of Hickok's dug-out with a log and together rushed him where he waited at bay with a Mississippi Yager, two revolvers and two bowie-knives.

He killed four as they crossed the threshold, killed two more in the hand-to-hand grapple and wounded two; killed one of these outside before he could mount his horse. Of the ten men only three escaped from the scene, and one of them died from his injuries. Bill said—

"I just got wild and slashed about like a bear with a death-wound, and I guess that is how I came to get away with them."

From that day on he was "Wild Bill."

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The Flaw in Greenbie

by Hubert Roussel

Author of "The Wreck on Two Sisters," "The Bargain Mate," etc.

HAVING landed on the beach of Vailua, you found Greenbie's house by walking along a shell path neatly bordered by twin rows of empty beer-bottles set slantwise in the ground.

It had taken a great many bottles for the job, and your first impression would have been that the white man of Vailua was a heavy drinker. But this was not so. Greenbie had lived on the island for all of fifteen years, during which time even a moderate user of liquor may accumulate a creditable collection of empty containers. And add to that the fact that such of us schooner skippers as called seldom failed to do our brave bit toward lengthening the neat border of old Greenbie's shell path.

The path meandered through a belt of coco palms and took you up a steep rise, at the top of which you arrived puffing. Before you, across a little stretch of velvet soft grass, was Greenbie's bungalow, and, unless the occasion was rare, Greenbie himself, sitting on the screen veranda with his pipe resting on his chest.

In that pose he was about the picture of placidity from across the clearing. He was fat; but "big" is the word that comes to mind when I try to describe him; for old Greenbie was fleshy in a dignified, inoffensive sort of way. He filled the big wicker chair, and he managed to look supremely comfortable in it without looking lazy. His blue eyes were likely to be half-closed. He looked—well, comfortable.

But once old Greenbie glimpsed you coming down the path the illusion was shattered. He came out of the chair with a snap that made it impossible to think of him as fat; in a moment he was through the screen door and standing on the top step, his blue eyes wide open and friendly, his big hand thrust out, his broad lips smiling. And his "Ah, captain, this *is* a pleasure!" was one of the few things that convinced you that running a schooner in the Paumotus had any advantages at all over being in hell itself.

Old Greenbie would sit you down on the veranda, give you a bottle of cool beer—which he kept cool in a little spring-house in the yard—or a tot of Scotch, as you perferred, and about the last thing he would ever mention was his own business. Finally, when your conscience got pricking you too hard, you would bring up the subject of shell with a downright criminal feeling. Then with a half-impatient wave of his hand for such inconsequentials old Greenbie would admit that he had a ton or so of shell down on the beach which you might be good enough to take along if you were running in to Papeete.

That was the funny thing. As I've said, Greenbie had leased Vailua from the French some fifteen years before, and during a good part of that time he had held the right to dive shell out of the lagoon. The island itself was a dinky little humpbacked affair, old Greenbie being the sole white occupant. The lagoon was a bit better, running out between long arms, and during the diving-season Greenbie did keep a small force of

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Paumotan boys puttering about in it. But in the five years I had called at Vailua, I had never taken away anything like a decent cargo of shell, and the shell itself not the best at that. The prices it fetched at Papeete made it seem almost a useless business to ship it.

Now to keep an island, however dinky, and to maintain a force of divers, however clumsy, takes money, and a right good deal of money at that. Old Greenbie wasn't anywhere near meeting expenses with his shell, as anybody could tell. Yet the shell was his only visible means of livelihood.

What invisible sources he had I never could find out, though, when I'd been on the run a while, I took the trouble to quiz the only two other skippers that ever called at his island. They knew even less about Greenbie's private affairs than I did. No, they never took him mail; I was carrying it all, it seemed. And the only mail I carried to old Greenbie in five years was a couple of large envelops bearing no return card but with a London postmark. Which envelops I naturally suspected of containing in some form the wherewithal to maintain his establishment.

But if that was the case it meant that old Greenbie had money somewhere back in the world. And right there I would lose my temper. What the everlasting *et cetera* would a man with money and in his right mind be doing living down here with the flies and fever on the very front doorstep of hades?

There are, of course, only three main reasons why men bury themselves on such islands: They are broke and stranded, they are making money, or they are wanted somewhere. Old Greenbie had never been broke. He wasn't making money. And as for the other—poof! One look into his big blue eyes and you'd sworn old Greenbie had never done a worse wrong in his forty-odd years of life than crushing out mosquitoes.

So the man remained a mystery to me; for our talk on the veranda, while it was seldom of his own business, never got away from generalities. Things drummed along in just that way to tantalize your curiosity. I took away from old Greenbie's island—nothing; except an occasional few tons of poor shell. I hauled all of old Greenbie's supplies, and they were such as any ordinary man in the same situation would order—except twice when I took out stout little wooden boxes marked with the name of some French concern in Paris.

I'm hanged if the business didn't finally get so it sort of worried me. It was the first time I knew I had a streak of woman curiosity. I used to chew it over in my mind when I was alone on deck under the stars; I used to mull it over and wonder and ask roundabout questions when I was drinking old Greenbie's cool beer; and I got about as much out of the stars as I got out of Greenbie, though never did I know whether or not he suspected what I was up to.

That was it! You couldn't tell just how keen the man was. It got something like a game. An average of once every three months for five years I saw old Greenbie, and I spent the time in between wondering and laying traps for him; and some day, I told myself, I was coming out pointblank and ask him what he was doing here—though I knew I never would. For all his good nature, old Greenbie wasn't the kind you could do that with.

So things rocked along.

Finally one day I had the *Dolphin* out for a scraping at Papeete, and I heard my name called from below. I looked down. There was a well-dressed man a bit past middle age, with a neat salt-and-pepper beard, standing alongside. He didn't belong in Papeete or anywhere thereabout.

"Are you Captain Walling?"

"I am," I said. "What can I do for you?"

I shinned down the ladder to get closer.

He pinched a pair of glasses on to his thin nose and looked me over for a moment.

"I understand you are going out into the Paumotus."

"It's my regular beat, sir."

"I should like to go along with you next trip," he said.

"Sorry, but I don't haul passengers. Haven't got accommodations in the first place. In the second I can't promise any schedule; I——"

"Oh, I'm prepared to rough it, captain. And to make it—well, worth your while," he cut in on me.

"Why don't you try some of the other craft then? There's several running into the Paumotus that make a business of——"

"But there's a particular reason why I wish to go aboard your boat, captain. Would—say—seventy pounds interest you at all?"

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It did, of course. It pretty well took my breath away, as the saying is. I stood for a bit and stared at my distinguished-looking visitor. British without doubt—sticking to his quid with a fine contempt for the French monetary system.

What was his game? No pearl scouts offered such fares. And he wanted to go aboard *my* boat. Pretty quickly my interest in the man himself was bigger than my interest in the price he offered. I said:

"The Paumotus are spread over a good deal of ocean. Each schooner calls at only a few. I suppose you've posted yourself on my beat. I wouldn't go off——"

"Of course not. I know. The run is an out-of-the-way one. That's why I came to you. One of the islands I wish particularly to call at, captain, is Vailua."

He said it with the same calm matter-of-factness he had exhibited throughout, but it hit me like a rifle-ball. Vailua! The first white man that had ever asked me for passage there! I felt what the book-writing crew call a "thrill."

I thought of old Greenbie lounging in his wicker chair, so placid and yet so disturbing—to me, at least—of his blue eyes that seemed so frank, yet baffled you with their very openness. My man was lighting a rich cigar, and he offered me a second.

"I suppose you know there's only one white man on Vailua," I said. "His name is Greenbie—Horace Greenbie. You——"

The bearded man nodded his head.

"It is Mr. Greenbie that I wish to see at Vailua."

"All right; I'll take you," I agreed, breaking my rule in such matters. "You'll have to take what I've got. The *Dolphin* sails at six day after tomorrow morning."

He thanked me and went away. I climbed back on deck, and I had plenty to fuddle my mind. It occurred to me that the bearded man hadn't even told me his name. When he came aboard at daybreak two days later I asked him, and he gave it to me—Stanley Maynard. And for a right good while his name and his passage money were about all he did give me.

But it was the fine season, and the nights were starry and the air pretty heady for these latitudes; and after a while Mr. Maynard got to coming on deck and sitting alongside the wheel while I stood the eight-to-midnight watch.

We chit-chatted about this and that and never said anything in particular. Then one night when our cigars were going good he asked because of nothing—

"Ever do any pearl-buying, captain?"

I felt another mild thrill. I would soon have Mr. Maynard classified. But I was going to be disappointed if he turned out the usual thing in pearl-buyers.

"Oh, a little," I said; "nothing to amount to anything. It's no business for us skippers any more. The professional buyers run the market, and they get on the ground first. They lend the native money against the next season's diving, and they've got about every pearl worth having mortgaged before it's ever fished out."

"Umm! Ever buy any from Mr. Greenbie on Vailua?"

"I think you must have the place down wrong," I told him. "Vailua's not a pearl-fishing island. Nothing worth having's been got out of the lagoon there in years. Nothing in Greenbie's time. Greenbie has a shell business."

"You say pearls were once found there, though?"

"A few—mediocre ones."

Then I decided it was time to take the bit in my own teeth.

"Were you figuring on doing any buying in the group?" I asked.

It was a slip. Mr. Maynard drew in his head, said carelessly, "Oh—it's hardly probable," switched the talk hastily to distances between islands, and pretty soon shut up and went below.

And that was the way things stood when we ran into the lagoon at Vailua the next afternoon and dropped the hook.

I HAD some supplies for Greenbie, part of which we loaded into the whaleboat. Among them was another of those little wooden boxes with the French trade-marks. I saw Mr. Maynard eying it curiously. Presently we made a landing on the beach; and, leaving the boys to unload the boat, I led Mr. Maynard up old Greenbie's bottle-bordered shell path.

"Know Greenbie, do you?"

Mr. Maynard shook his head.

"I wish you would introduce me, captain. And then if you would——"

He hesitated.

"Well—I've a rather private matter to bring up with——"

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He sanded up again, and I nodded to save him further discomfort.

When we topped the rise all was as usual. There sat old Greenbie in his chair on the veranda; and he sprang up, laid aside his pipe and came out to meet us. But as we approached I noted the lines of puzzlement drawn above his eyebrows; and in his wide blue eyes, which failed to reflect the smile on his lips, there was an odd look that didn't seem altogether curiosity.

I introduced Mr. Maynard, explaining that he was making the cruise with me; and after we'd swapped small talk for a while over cool bottles I excused myself on the pretext of looking after the unloading of the remaining supplies.

I went down to the beach and sat for an hour, and I fairly itched with a highly contemptible curiosity. What was going on was none of my business whatever—and yet——

More and more I wondered about old Greenbie. Suppose his air of almost boyish openness was in reality some superlative duplicity. Who was this Maynard? Who was old Greenbie? Had he interred himself for the usual ugly reason after all? Had Maynard come to——

I got to thinking of the queerness of old Greenbie's house for the first time. Here on the beach of the lagoon was the only logical location for a bungalow on Vailua; but from here you could no more see Greenbie's bungalow than you can see the houses of Mars. Even the bottle-bordered path you would be unlikely to stumble on, beginning as it did in the edge of the screening palms. Old Greenbie's bungalow squatted hidden, tree-sheltered and vine-festooned, on the exposed seaward side of the island, squatted on the dizzy edge of a bluff that dropped sheer a hundred feet and more to nastily foaming water half a mile deep. I sat and wondered like a rheumy old woman, and the boys might have pitched Greenbie's supplies into the lagoon for all the overlooking I did—though some of the cargo was stick dynamite, which old Greenbie used for shooting fish in the lagoon.

At the end of an hour I decided that Mr. Maynard had had time to say his say. I got up and walked toward the house. As I came within sight of the place I missed the figures of Greenbie and Maynard on the veranda. I approached a little closer, entered the clearing—then suddenly I brought up stiff in my tracks and stood gaping.

Greenbie's bungalow was bisected by a broad hallway that ran from front veranda to back, the rooms opening on it from either side. From where I stood now I could look through the length of this tunnel; and it was here that my gaze riveted——

Down the dim hallway I saw flitting the bent, furtive form of Mr. Maynard. That he moved on tiptoe was easy to be seen, and he moved with an almost incredible swiftness for a man of his years. Across and across the passage, from door to door he darted, noiselessly opening each a few inches and peering into the room beyond. Finally, near the end of the hall, he opened the last door on the right, froze like a marble statue, clenching the knob; then he drew back a little, staring. And I could have sworn that from where I stood, sixty yards away, I heard him gasp.

Suddenly I thought of old Greenbie. He was nowhere to be seen. I had left him in his wicker chair; it yawned significantly empty. But, from where I stood, the baseboard of the screen veranda was quite high enough to hide——

A needle of ice ran up and down my spine. I shuddered, and it was as if I returned to life after having been a stone man. And the most weird and horrible notion crawled slimily into my mind. Had Maynard——?

Without pausing to conjecture further I started again toward the house when suddenly there was a sharp creak. I looked aside and saw that the door of the small outbuilding which covered Greenbie's spring at some distance from the house stood open. Then portly old Greenbie himself stepped out, a cool bottle in either hand.

Almost without thinking I sprang back behind a bush, watching to see what would happen. My eyes went back to Maynard. Still he stood frozen to the door-knob. But at the slam of the out-house door his head jerked and he sprang into action. Soundlessly closing the door he held, he turned and sped on tiptoe back to the veranda. And when old Greenbie rounded the corner of the house, Mr. Maynard was sitting in his chair as composed and innocent-looking as you please!

Then it all dawned on me. Old Greenbie had simply gone to fetch fresh bottles—an office he never allowed his houseboy to perform—and Maynard had for some reason taken the occasion to spy on Greenbie's rooms.

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Why? I couldn't guess; my thoughts were in a jumble. My single impulse was to laugh with relief from the morbid Thing that had gripped me. The two men filled their glasses; and, watching my chance, I slipped from my hiding-place and came on up the path as if nothing had happened.

I found them discussing the shell market in the most uninteresting fashion. Soon I remarked that the unloading was done and I had best be getting on. Whereat Mr. Maynard put in that his business was done also; we rose, there were handshakings and the conventional partings, and my passenger and I went back aboard.

I watched Mr. Maynard pretty closely for any queer movements from then on, but he made none. And he left me to solve my riddle as best I could, for he had another of his uncommunicative fits. It lasted three days, Mr. Maynard keeping largely to his stateroom.

But then he had to let off the pressure that was in him—as, I thought, the snooping sort always did. He came to me on deck one night. We passed some inconsequentials; then he opened up—

"There's not much water in the lagoon back there at Vailua, is there?"

"Not too much," I said, none too sweetly. "About half of it's five fathoms; the rest a fathom and less."

"And there's shell in the shallow water as well as the deep?"

"Some. But it's not worth anything, of course. Why?"

He was silent while he puffed the end of his cigar into a glowing beacon. He took a turn across the deck as if something was riding his mind hard and he couldn't decide whether or not to come out with it. Finally he stopped in front of the wheel with his legs spraddled out, staring at me through his glasses.

"You've been sailing these waters a good while, haven't you, Captain Walling?"

"Ten years, off and on. Five years on this run. What——"

"Ever hear tales about anybody—anybody trying to make pearls in these islands?"

"Eh?"

"Make them—manufacture them."

He bit it out as if it hurt him, and he was sorry he'd said it.

I laughed just as you'd have done.

"Never. What's the use? Up in the States they can turn 'em out in a nice, cool factory so you can't tell the dif——"

"But I mean the real thing," he snapped sharply; "not that nonsense. Didn't you ever hear of any one trying it down here?"

I sobered and thought back a long way.

"Well, there was a chink once," I admitted, "over in the Tongas—I've only heard tales about him. Seems he had some such wild idea; and, so the yarn goes, he did produce a few good blisters——"

"Ah, that's it!" cried Mr. Maynard. "He—he treated the oyster itself in some way?"

"I think that was the story," I said. "But it was a barroom product, and you know what they are. And it's musty with age. I thought it was dead. Who's been dragging it out again?"

Mr. Maynard tugged at his cigar and looked at the deck.

"Yours wasn't the exact story I heard," was all he said.

"Then there's a new one? This time about a white man?" I guessed.

Then I plunged like a fool.

"And you—you thought it might be—Greenbie——"

And like a fool I could hold myself in no longer. The idea of old Greenbie—solid, stolid old Greenbie—*manufacturing* pearls! It was too good.

"Ho-ho-ho!" I roared.

And then I thought of Mr. Maynard skittering along old Greenbie's hallway on tiptoe, peeking into Greenbie's rooms, looking—for pearls? Manufactured pearls? And I doubled up and let go again.

Mr. Maynard didn't seem to mind particularly; stood puffing away while I had my laugh and the *Dolphin* ran two points off her course.

"Do you know," I burst out finally, the tears running down my cheeks, "you've been something of a mystery to me, Mr. Maynard, since you came aboard. Because—well, never mind. But now I've got you catalogued; I can tell you what you are——"

I saw at once I'd gone too far with it. Or perhaps he misunderstood what I meant by my last sentence.

His face set hard, and he took the cigar out of his mouth.

"I daresay you can," he snapped out, and with that whirled on his heel with a military click and marched down to his quarters.

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AND that ended any intimacies between Mr. Maynard and me. We drifted on around the dreary circuit, and he went ashore at only a couple of the islands; and then I suspected he talked to nobody—went merely for my benefit.

Aboard he kept to himself; so that I was pretty glad to raise Papeete again and have the queer cruise over. Ashore went Mr. Maynard with his baggage after a formal good-by, and I figured I'd seen the last of him, a man on as wild a goose-chase as ever made good telling over a cool bottle.

I wondered how much he'd let out to old Greenbie. Certain it was that Greenbie hadn't been a witness to the bit of rare comedy in his hallway. That was mine alone, and I grinned whenever I thought of it. Old Greenbie could appreciate a joke; and I would have a rare good one to tell him when next I sat in one of his wicker chairs on the shady veranda. All in all, I told myself, I wasn't sorry of having broken a rule and carried a passenger.

About old Greenbie I knew as little as ever; but I did know a good deal about Mr. Stanley Maynard: I knew that old Greenbie would appreciate what I knew, and—who could tell? Perhaps it might open the way into the confidence of old Greenbie himself.

One thing stumped me for a while. What had made Mr. Maynard freeze on to the knob of that door there in old Greenbie's hallway? I thought on it a bit and then remembered that the room in whose doorway he had stood had a window that commanded the spring-house in the yard. Then it was simple: Maynard had been able to see the door of old Greenbie's spring-house move before I had, of course. Oh, it was going to make rare, rare telling over a pair of old Greenbie's cool bottles all right!

The *Dolphin* berthed; and, things moving out of her hold, I gathered up my belongings and prepared to move back into my own stateroom, which I'd given up to my passenger. As I stepped inside an object on the floor caught my eye. I picked it up. It was a thin bundle of business cards neatly held in a leather case; plainly it had slipped from the pocket of some garment hanging on the hook just above. Then I read the name engraved on the cards; my eyes popped out, and I gulped.

Mr. Stanley Maynard wasn't Stanley Maynard. Rather, my passenger had traveled under a false name. Or else he was carrying another man's card-case, which was unlikely.

But it was the name on the cards that had my eyes sticking out crab-like. They read, "H. Worthington Dellit," and down in the corner, "DeVere & Dellit, Ltd." And of course if you've ever shopped for jewels in London town, or if you haven't, you know DeVere & Dellit!

Queer things were happening just a bit too fast for one of my quiet and orderly pursuits! For a minute I stood and stared at the cards while the whole odd business whirled and flickered round in my head like a movie film gone out of gear——

H. Worthington Dellit of DeVere & Dellit, Ltd., maundering around down here on the stinking bottom of the earth! Gadding about on a shell schooner to see an island hermit! Sneaking down old Greenbie's hall like a peeping housemaid to look—for manufactured pearls!

And if he wasn't H. Worthington Dellit, then what was he doing with Dellit's cards? Was he mad? Were we all mad? The whole business was like a warped dream out of the pipe. Well, I *would* have something to tell old Greenbie now! And who the ——, pray, was old Greenbie himself? Was——

They shouted for me on deck, and I slipped the cards into my pocket. It was the last chance I had to look at them that day.

It was exactly two months later that I sailed the *Dolphin* into the lagoon at Vailua again. I had the whaleboat overboard at once, and I went up the shell path faster than was good in the heat. There sat old Greenbie in the wicker chair as usual. Suddenly the queer idea struck me that he might have some way of watching the lagoon and that he merely struck that pose for the visitor's benefit. We got the preliminaries over; then I asked—

"The chap that talked with you the last trip—you recall him, of course."

"Of course," said old Greenbie.

"I don't know what he talked to you about—shell, I imagine. But do you know what he really came to see you for?"

I watched old Greenbie's face. He closed his eyes. Then for the first time I saw, with a decided shock, that old Greenbie's face was really hard. There was flint in his wide lips, harsh lines about their corners that somehow you never discovered under the softening influence of the wide blue

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eyes. I happened to look down—there were more empty whisky-bottles beneath old Greenbie's table than I had ever seen there.

"Mr. Maynard came here," said old Greenbie slowly without opening his eyes, "because he thought I was manufacturing synthetic pearls, Walling. I fired Anuka, my old houseboy, for prying about, and he's up in Papeete talking in the booze-dives——"

"Ho-ho-ho!" I shouted. "Then you already know the joke! You—ha-ha-ha! But wait—you don't know it all, Greenbie. You've missed the best part, I'll wager. Listen—you didn't see him when——"

"If you are ridiculing Maynard because of what he believed," interrupted old Greenbie, half-opening his eyes, "you'd better wait yourself, Walling. Because in what he thought, Mr. Maynard was right."

If he had risen and clubbed me with his chair I could not have broken off my guffaw any shorter; nor felt more stunned. I stared at old Greenbie across our bottles. He rubbed his nose with his pipebowl.

"You—you mean to say——"

"I've never shown you my collection, of course. Come here."

Old Greenbie rose, and with childlike meekness I followed him into the hallway. I fancied his big body swayed a bit unsteadily; his steps were heavy. At the door where I had seen one man freeze stiff in his tracks old Greenbie paused, opening it with a mere turn of the knob. He threw it back.

Almost the same thing that had happened to the other man happened now to me; and I fancy my gasp could have been heard as far. I had been in this room before. Then it was a sort of office, a place where old Greenbie kept his books, shell-samples and such-like odds and ends. Furniture there was none save a broad shelf running the length of one side; it had used to hold the books and shell-samples. And now——

There must have been fully three hundred of them. Pint after pint after pint of them, spilling helter-skelter over the shelf with nothing under them but the bare, rough boards, and the sunshine falling over them through the window in a way to— Well, I knew exactly why the other man had been stabbed and petrified where he stood.

Sizes? They were of all believable sizes—and then they staggered up, up, up. If I say hen-eggs you will scoff. Scoff away. They were that. They were that, and they ran the scale from that down to pea-size; and somewhere in the scale the sun was picking out every color in the spectrum and hurling it at you. Even the blacks were there, I'll swear!

I heard old Greenbie's voice coming as from a long way off:

"Pretty, you think? Bah! If you only knew! With a little piece of wax and——"

"Good God!" I gulped. "You mean to say you *made* those things, Greenbie?"

"Oh, no. The oysters down in the shallow part of the lagoon, Walling; the oysters. I only—help a little——"

And now I was sure about the unsteadiness of old Greenbie's gait. His voice was too thick, his tongue clumsy with the sibilants, for the first time in our acquaintance.

He moved across the room, beckoning me to follow, and picked at random one of the pearls from the sprawling pile. He tossed it to me as you would toss a pebble, and I caught it. It weighed as much—Well, never mind; you'd not believe; but I'd not spent ten years of my life roasting my hide and hauling pearl-buyers among the islands for nothing—not to mention a little buying on my own hook.

My mouth hung agape as I turned the pellet over with my fingers, over and over. The sun fell on it, and it sparkled up at me softly, impudently, as if daring me to find what I sought. Perfect! My jaw went yet looser. Perfect! And every one of that careless pile dribbling over the bench the match of it for flawlessness!

Suddenly old Greenbie jerked it from my fingers with a half-angry movement and tossed it back on the pile.

"Oh, there's nothing wrong with 'em, never fear. I learned the proper way long, long——"

He broke off, caught my arm, shoved me toward the door.

"Come now, that's enough; they're no good, Walling; not worth wasting your time on," he said cryptically.

"—— 'em! Come along, I say. I'll fetch a fresh bottle. Come now!"

And so I was shoved out and back to the veranda, while old Greenbie continued on to his spring-house for the bottles.

When he returned he filled his glass, dashed it off and stuck his pipe into his mouth but did not light it; it dropped on his chest, and a heavy silence fell. Out of

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the crazy flicker and whirl of thoughts in my head I snatched words.

"I—I don't just get what it all means, Greenbie. But—man! There's many a woman that'd give her soul for a twentieth part of what you've got in there!"

"And for less," said old Greenbie thickly around his pipe-stem. "For less, Walling. Mine—did——"

I squirmed in my chair, seeing I'd played the wrong card. But—I'd struck the key to old Greenbie, and he was off at last!

"EVER been in London?" he shot at me in his thickened drawl.

"Then you know Boltard's," he continued before I could reply. "Boltard's chemicals. I used to be assistant to the head chemist there, Walling; believe it? And that's where this began—" with a jerk of his thumb toward the house. "And the reason it began was because of a woman."

He broke off, picked up his glass and stared at the dregs it held. Old Greenbie was even drunker than I had thought. He went on jerkily:

"She wanted 'em, Walling—pearls—longed for 'em. I couldn't buy 'em, of course, on a chemist's screw—yet I was fool enough to believe she loved me most. Then one day I had an idea—why not make 'em! I'd been reading of experiments; I was young, too full of energy and hope, a prime fool.

"I started to experiment on my own. And by the saints, right from the first I got results that encouraged me, set me half-crazy. I didn't tell her—some day I'd surprize her; bring her a pearl that'd gratify her wildest desire.

"I got in a fever—spent more and more time away from her. We were to have been married in the Fall, but I'd squandered on my idea, and we had to put it off till Spring—and then I had to tell her the truth."

Old Greenbie replaced the glass and closed his eyes.

"From the first she never had any confidence in my scheme, Walling. Perhaps she thought I was crazy. Anyway one night I went to her flat. She was gone.

"There was a note. She'd eloped. With a man who could give her everything, a man I'd never seen, but that I knew by reputation—yes, and that you'd know right now. Oh, there'd been rumors, but I'd never believed; and——"

Old Greenbie broke off, snapped open his blue eyes and sat staring ahead. The eyes were hard as flint.

"I left London that night, England the next day, Walling. When I sobered up again I was down here with a few pounds left. I lived in a stinking thatch over on Tiana; got muddling round again, and—one day I stumbled on the trick of the thing; and I began to make pearls, or rather to make the oysters make 'em——"

"And you've been selling pearls all along!" I exclaimed.

"I sold enough to get off Tiana and take this place; the lagoon is better here. Since then I've sold only enough to keep me going here. Done it quietly."

"But those in there?"

"Are all I've accumulated over a period of fifteen years."

"And you're going to sell them now?" I guessed.

Old Greenbie shook his head; a queer, wild light burned now in his eyes.

"But I'm getting ready to send them away, Walling. I've been waiting, waiting till I got enough; it's all I've lived for these fifteen years."

His voice grew tense and hoarse.

"Now—I'm going to send them away—to her. No ceremony, understand; I'll simply put them in a wooden box, just as you'd ship boots or tins of jam. And in London she'll open them, Walling, or she'll have her servant open 'em just as she'd open a box of boots or tinned jam!"

Old Greenbie took the pipe from his mouth and laughed as at some huge joke; laughed loudly for the first time since I'd know him—and it was no pleasant sound.

"Imagine! Imagine, Walling! She'll open the box as she'd open tinned jam—and out they'll roll! Hundreds of 'em! They'll spill over her; they'll bury her; they'll shake the breath out of her—a packing-case of pearls from the man she couldn't wait for, that couldn't buy her a single pearl sixteen years ago!"

And old Greenbie threw back his head and laughed again at his weird joke, the unpleasant, high-pitched laugh.

I no longer knew the man across from me. There is a saying that all of us are insane on some point. Here I had the taint, the flaw in old Greenbie; and it made me feel strangely uneasy.

"Ever hear of DeVere & Dellit when you

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were in London?" he rasped out suddenly, and I started half out of my chair. "Dellit was the man, Walling," I heard him saying; "young Dellit. Oh, he could give her a few pearls then from his puny shop, Walling—but now——"

He hesitated.

I had turned to stone in my chair. The card-case I'd found in my state-room was in my shirt pocket, and I could feel my heart knocking it up and down. I don't know what made me do it; I must have been crazy; I must have caught some of Greenbie's wild mood. But without a word, scarcely conscious of what I did, I reached for the case and slid it across the table.

For a moment old Greenbie stared at it stupidly. Then opened it with his stubby fingers. His face went deathly white.

"Where'd you get this?" he rumbled.

I told him in a few mixed-up words.

"And not only that," I added, "but Dellit—if he was Dellit—knows about your pearls. Were they in that room the day he was here?"

Greenbie nodded, stupid with shock, and I went on to blat out what I'd seen while he was at the spring-house. Then at last I came to my senses, and I tried to mend what I'd done by saying:

"So I'd not send the pearls if I were you. It'll be no surprize now, you see."

There my voice mercifully failed me.

Poor old Greenbie! He sat staring blankly before him as one in an awful trance, and you could hear him breathe. The leather case shook in his fingers.

"I wonder—" he moaned out at last. "If I'd only known! O God! If you had only——"

He stopped as if the light had been snapped off in his mind.

Half an hour later I left old Greenbie, feeling lower than a pup for what I'd done; yet things, I reflected, could have been worse. Dellit—if he was Dellit—was out of the way; and I had a peculiar faith in the calm sanity old Greenbie had always displayed until today; somehow I felt that maybe it had all been for the best; that now he'd come right; that when next I called it would be to find the Greenbie I knew, balanced, placid, sitting on the veranda with his pipe on his chest.

But the pearls! The rest was all like a bad, hurlyburly dream; but they—they were real; I'd swear that—I'd held one in my hand. And I went to sleep thinking of the dozen fortunes scattered over the bench in old Greenbie's back room.

ANOTHER two months went by before I raised Vailua again.

There was nasty weather threatening. We had worked all day against shifting squalls. Toward night they broke off suddenly, and there was hardly a capful of air. It was nine o'clock when we raised the island, and we saw it as a hulking blur startlingly close to starboard; for the moon was behind a blanket of clouds. It took us half an hour to fetch the passage, where we lowered the whaleboat and towed through.

It was infernally hot, as hot as I ever saw it after dark; my boys were about done up by the time we cleared the coral. We shipped the boat, slacked sail and started slowly down the lagoon for the anchorage.

Just then the moon dodged out for a moment and disappeared again. Lunn, my mate, asked in a startled voice—

"Did you see that?"

I had. Dimly I could see it yet, and I felt a queer drawing of the skin all over my body. There was a schooner lying at anchor off old Greenbie's shell path.

"Looked like the *Paumotan Girl*," said Lunn. "She was for charter last I heard, in Papeete."

I knew that, too. I hadn't intended going ashore till morning; but I ordered:

"Keep a little away from her, Lunn. And I want the boat out again as soon as we let go."

I gave these orders, hardly realizing I was doing it; I heard my voice as if it were another's. And in the same fashion I went below and slipped a revolver into my breeches pocket. I couldn't have said why. It was not until I was in the boat and we were passing the other schooner, all dark from stem to stern, that the muddle in my head began to clear at all.

I saw as we passed that she *was* the *Paumotan Girl*—the *Paumotan Girl* for charter—in Papeete. There wasn't any one in Papeete who wanted to see old Greenbie badly enough to charter a schooner, unless—Dellit! Dellit, with the pearls for bait! Lord! Weren't they enough to tempt the angels themselves back?

And then again something slimy crawled into my mind. Dellit here? Ashore? And

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old Greenbie knowing? And I had the reason for my actions.

My boat struck the sand. Fifty yards away I made out a small rowboat drawn up; there was no one in it.

Leaving my boys to wait, I quit the beach and started up the shell path. The devils that possessed me whipped me along. Within fifty yards I was running and panting.

I threaded the coconut-grove; approached the edge; caught a glimpse through the trees of Greenbie's house. There was a single dim light burning in a front room—a bedroom, I remembered. Still the devils would not let me rest.

Without slackening my gait I charged on for the clearing when suddenly a hand reached out from the shadow of a bush, caught my arm and jerked me to a standstill. I looked up into the face of old Greenbie!

"What—what the —— are you doing out here?" I gasped before I could catch myself.

"What are *you* doing here?" replied old Greenbie in a hoarse, strained voice.

"I was going up to see you. I just got in. I thought——"

And of course I had to stop.

His fingers did not relax their grip on my arm.

"Well, it's lucky I caught you," he said, and shot a queer glance across the clearing. "What business have you that brings you on the run at this hour, Walling? We'd better transact it here."

"I— Why can't we go to the house?" I parried.

Still he held my arm. I felt a tremor run through his fingers.

"Something's going to happen to the house—in a moment——"

"What do you mean?"

"It's going to fly into splinters."

I looked into his eyes. They were glittering feverishly as I had seen them glitter once before. There was a meaningless smile on his lips.

"All the last fish dynamite you brought me, Walling, is under that house, with——"

And then I understood. And the devils in me rose up again and lashed me on. It came to me in a flash—the dim light in the bedroom—Dellit—the sore that would eat my soul forever— A shudder of unnameable horror ran over me. Greenbie was chuckling. I tried to shout; no sound came. Then I went mad.

"Let me go!" I gritted. "Let me go! My God! I've got—to tell him—to——"

And in some fashion I wrenched myself from Greenbie's powerful grip. I whirled—started to run, reaching for my revolver. Greenbie with a surprized oath lunged after me, but I heard him trip and go sprawling.

"Come back, you fool!" he screamed.

I ran for the house.

Then before me the doors of hell opened wide for one red instant, twin hammer blows shattered my ear-drums, and the ground rose up and met my face.

I fell half on my side. And as I lay, too stunned to move, the bits of old Greenbie's bungalow rained and pelted about me, and I heard other larger pieces go whistling over the bluff, down to the sea a hundred and more feet below.

Old Greenbie picked me up.

"You fool!" he growled. "What's up with you? A little more and you'd have gone with the house!"

"And Dellit!" I blurted in a half-sob. "Oh, Greenbie, Greenbie, you've played—"

"Dellit? What the —— are you talking about?" he snapped.

I gulped.

"Wasn't—wasn't he— Oh, don't lie, Greenbie; it——"

At that old Greenbie threw back his head and laughed till I knew he was crazy.

"Why, you poor lamb, Dellit's in Papeete, I suppose. Or on his way to London. And you—you thought— Oh, ho-ho-ho!"

And he was off again.

I knew why women have hysteria; I felt a touch of it.

"Then who did come on the *Paumotan Girl* down there?" I cried shrilly at him.

Old Greenbie broke off in the middle of his guffaw; but a smile remained on his lips—and, looking back, it was the finest smile I ever saw on any man's lips.

"Martha," he said softly. "Martha—from London."

"*Who?* You mean——"

"Yes. You remember what I told you last time you were here? Then you'll understand. She lost her nerve that night in London, Walling. She didn't go with Dellit—any further than the license clerk's. Then she flew back to her home—but I had been and gone. Oh, it's all been a horrible mistake!

"They've been looking for me ever since, both of them, for Dellit really cared. Then

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he heard of me in Papeete, from Anuka, who said I was crazy; came incognito to make sure I wasn't, and instead of telling me—sent for her! God bless 'im! He loaned her the money to charter the *Paumotan Girl* in Papeete——"

"But *that!*" I shouted, pointing to where had been the house. "Then what——"

"To get rid of certain things, Walling," said old Greenbie kindly.

"Not the——"

"Yes—plus a little apparatus. Did you ever hear of the —— things making anybody happy, Walling? Ugh! They're a curse on the face of the earth! Martha, too, agrees they're responsible for more misery than happiness. Besides, I—we both—hated this place—and so——

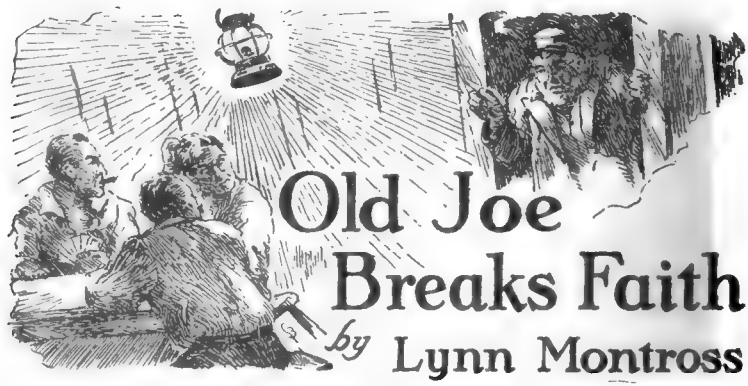
"Man, you're shuddering like a leaf! Come along now; pull yourself together; it's all over. Sorry if I startled you. I've still a bottle or so left aboard—that'll fix you up."

I met her twenty minutes later, and she was just the sort you'd imagine doing what she'd done—even to backing old Greenbie in the wild job he'd just finished. The years had not dealt unkindly with her; the queer glitter was gone out of old Greenbie's eyes—gone with the house it was born in—leaving them the frank, friendly blue; and they made a fine pair as they stood on the *Paumotan Girl's* quarter-deck next morning while she hauled out her hook and got away.

Which was the last I ever saw of Horace Greenbie.

Yet, I went back ashore and combed the ruins, what there was of them, just as you'd have done. But you'd have had your trouble for your pains. Nor did I stop with the ruins; I turned every stick and blade of grass for the length of Vailua, and since then it's been done by many another, for the yarn is now public property. But all had the same luck.

Yet I'd swear old Greenbie didn't take his pearls away with him. My guess is that most of his bungalow with its contents was blown clear over the cliff and into the sea. And did I say that the water is half a mile deep just there?



Old Joe Breaks Faith

by Lynn Montross

Author of "In the Dark," "A Gulp of Water," etc.

AND the first mate asks the skipper—

"It's a right bright morning, sir, and I take it you made out with a good breakfast?"

Says the skipper of the *Thomas J. Hall* to the first mate—and the skipper had the twinkle in his eye:

"Well, Mr. Reeves, I'm not saying but what the breakfast was all right. It was, and I would say it, a warmin' good breakfast. For you know what the old woman can do with a toasting-fork. But—well, and it's Old Joe. He made me five minutes late in getting down to the docks this morning, Old Joe did. What with me having a

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head start in getting out of bed early, too. Blast his old soul! Still, I hadn't ought to be a-cussing of him, Old Joe. Kind of annoying when a man's in a hurry, though; Joe's so almighty slow at breakfast."

And the first mate can't think of anything to say on the subject. He looks kind of funny at the old man and changes the subject. The *Thomas J. Hall* puts off for Buffalo that morning with a cargo of wheat.

It's some days later, when we're cutting through Lake Erie, that the skipper brings it all up again.

"I've had all the trifling I'm going to stand for," he tells the first mate one morning just after he's come down from the pilot-house. And there was that same twinkle in the blue eye of him. If Old Joe don't get his teeth fixed when we get to Buffalo, he ain't ever going to ship again on the *Thomas J. Hall*. I've fiddled around and listened to his hums and haws and excuses long enough—it's time enough that he got them teeth fixed. What he needs is a set of grinders that he can take out of a night and put in a glass of water. Yes, —— him!"

Says Mr. Reeves—

"Er—yes, sir!"

It's not till we get to Buffalo and the cargo is all in the elevators and we're loaded again and the deckaroos has the swabbing done—that the skipper begins on it again. He's having a bit of a drink with the first mate in Pin Boyle's place down by the water-front.

"Well, now and it's funny," remarks the skipper. "Funny Old Joe ain't in here and taking a drink with us. Pretty strong for his nipper, and Old Joe is. Did you observe at the table yesterday how he was beginning to get anxious?"

The glasses are still half full, but the first mate says—

"And will you have another?"

"Well, and that brings it all back to mind," says the skipper. "That I'd completely forgot to explain to you how Old Joe almost made me late that morning when we was leaving Chicago with this cargo of wheat. It was this way. We was having toast for breakfast that morning and little else but toast. The old woman was so busy getting ready to ship, you know. I noticed Old Joe coming in from the bedroom a-looking pretty bleary-eyed from having a drop too much the night before.

"'Well, Joe,' I says to him, in trying to cheer him up a bit, 'they ain't much but toast this morning and the old woman has split it three ways—five slices of it to each.'"

The captain stops and chuckles, and Mr. Reeves takes down his glass and laughs also.

"Well, and do you know," says the captain, "the old woman clear forgot that Old Joe didn't have but one tooth in his head. Mr. Reeves, I'll ship in the black gang next time if it didn't take Old Joe just one hour and eleven minutes to eat them five slices of toast while me and the old woman has to wait for him. Greedy old ——! Ate every crum of them, he did. And made us all near late."

When the skipper and the first mate gets back to the freighter that night, the first mate watches for his chance to ask the captain's old woman—she was cooking on the *Thomas J. Hall* at the time—yes, and we never had a man cook that was huskier—to ask her about this Old Joe person.

The skipper's old woman was aft, engaging in a bit of an argument with the dishwasher. Lord, how she laughs!

"Now I'll be hanged," she says to the first mate, after he'd told her about it all. "And so he's been giving you all them stories about Old Joe. Old Joe, huh! Why, Mr. Reeves, they ain't no such human being as Old Joe. That's just a little joke he's been starting with me lately."

That's how they started, all these yarns about Old Joe.

So Mike Clannahan, of the black gang of the *Thomas J. Hall* told the clerks at the offices of the Hudson Navigation Company, just before the famous inquest of twelve years ago. The rest of the story we heard told to the coroner by the dishwasher and the first mate and the engineer.

THE *Thomas J. Hall!* No, they don't have freighters like her on the lakes any more, say what you will. There are larger ones now and better equipped ones, but none of them will ever chance the ice-floes as she did.

She was the toughest, bleariest, most swaggering old tub on the Great Lakes at that time. If you had ever leaned over the dingy railing of the Rush Street bridge in Chicago and seen the *Thomas J. Hall* coming in from Buffalo or Escanaba or Duluth

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or Cleveland—no, you'd never have forgotten her.

There's still a *Thomas J. Hall*, of course; a sleek, business boat that carries her ore quietly and is all shiny and minds her own affairs and has a curt, haven't-the-time whistle. But she's just carrying the name of the old *Thomas J. Hall*—not the spirit. And the old crew is scattered far and wide now, what's left of them. No, the new freighter is no more like the old *Thomas J. Hall* than the new concrete bridge at Michigan Avenue is like the old Rush Street bridge they're tearing down.

We used to watch for her to come in. You could hear her whistle the moment she turned into the Chicago River from the lake—*Oo-woo! Oo-woo-oh!! Oh-woo-oh-woo-oh-woo-oh-woo-ohhh!!!*

That blast of screeching, cussing, imperious sound was the pride of Hank Schweitzer, the engineer. He always swore that nobody else could put so much "cuss" into the whistle rope as he could.

It was a swaggering, profane whistle that made you feel that the *Thomas J. Hall* was coming in with muscle-bunched, swinging shoulders, rudely elbowing aside the factory buildings on either side of the narrow river; coming into Chicago just as one of its unshaven, greasy coal-heavers might throw open the door of a Dock Street saloon.

When the old freighter—it had been one of the first big ones on the lakes—neared the Rush Street bridge, it gave two low, hoarse whistles, as if to growl:

"Gimme room! Out o' my way!"

It always seemed to us that the Rush Street bridge invariably swung open into its creaking semicircle just a bit quicker for the *Thomas J. Hall* than for any other boat on the lakes. Not even the big, bright-crowded pleasure-boats bound for Michigan City and Milwaukee and St. Joe appeared to command so much attention.

Out of the black darkness of the river thirty feet below, the bleary, swinging lights of the *Thomas J. Hall* leered at you if you were on the opened bridge at dusk, waiting for her to pass. She wasn't large, as freighters go now, but she had about her an air of corded muscles and greasy flannel shirts and one bloodshot eye cocked in an invitation for you to take a drink with her.

Two hundred feet of black steel, there was a deck at either end of her. Between were the steel hatches where the cargo of wheat or ore or coal was battened down, and a place to walk by either rail. The gray paint on the cabins and on the pilot-house was scabby and even in the daytime you could hardly read the name, "*Thomas J. Hall* of Chicago."

You saw the faces of big Hank Schweitzer, the first engineer, and the coal-heavers looking out of the port-holes, black streaked and yellow in the dim gleam of the lights within, their hairy, smudged, dripping bodies bare from the waist up.

You saw the dimly lighted decks, swashing with water while the bare-headed, growling "deckaroos" administered a belated and much-needed scrubbing. You saw the one smoke-stack belching black clouds, blacker than the dusk as if in contempt of the very air. And you saw the old woman, a huge, broad-shouldered Amazon of forty with an amazing shock of red hair, sitting on a box just outside of the aft cabin, giving suck to a baby.

Maybe one or two of the deckaroos straightened up from their swabbing, leered at you and waved a huge paw in greeting. The Dock Street saloons were just on the other side of the bridge.

As the *Thomas J. Hall* lurched past with a clanking of chains and a clanging of shovels she gave three terrific blasts of her whistle in raucous ridicule of the long line of north-bound automobiles and pedestrians waiting for the closing of the bridge. Then you saw the skipper in the light of the pilot-house.

A huge, powerful hulk of a man, Captain John King's hair was white even in those days. There was a long livid scar on his forehead where the first mate of the *Sidney Long* had struck him with a bottle in a saloon fight at Duluth years before. He had been a fighting, cursing deckhand then, as rough as there was on the Lakes at the time, they said. When he was made second mate of the *Edwin L. Hatch* a few years later, he got to studying nights with the quartermaster and the first mate and was made first mate of the *Thomas J. Hall*. When the old skipper quit, he took his place.

"Ough, and it's never seemed right to the old man to be in the captain's quarters," Corney Fitzsimmons told us once in strict confidence. "He never can get used to all them trimmings and it's me that knows he'd feel more natural in the quarters of the black gang."

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The black gang of the *Thomas J. Hall* consisted of the deck-hands, or "deckaroos," and the coal-heavers. They lived aft, along with the dishwasher, in one dingy cabin of high-slung bunks; their meals were served to them in their quarters. The firemen and the engineers also lived aft. The fore cabins, luxurious in contrast to the quarters of the black gang, housed the skipper, the first and second mates and the quartermasters.

The skipper's wife, known to the skipper openly and to the crew secretly as "the old woman," was steward. Her meals and the skipper's red-fisted discipline were the two factors that made the black gang of the *Thomas J. Hall* the best satisfied on the Lakes. Some of them had been on the freighter for as long as two years while other skippers were having men quit at every port.

"Aye, I'd as soon 'a' fought the skipper hi'self as his ould woman," Mike Clannahan used to say. "Wasn't I at Buffalo once and seen her crack a dishwasher on the head with a plate when he's drunk and insulting of her? And how she could tip up a bottle of Scotch!"

Spidery derricks amid the glaring lights and midnight shadows of the big stone elevators—the *Thomas J. Hall* could load faster than any of them. And time enough for every member of the crew to slip through the swinging doors on the water-front for a drink or two.

A morning or two later, you'd see her putting out again. Dirtier and blearier than ever—scrubbing never seemed to help the *Thomas J. Hall.* She always put out much more quietly than she came in. Her whistling seemed more subdued and business-like. The few of the crew you saw on deck were working quietly and sullenly, without so much as looking up at the people leaning over the rail of the open bridge.

NOTHING more was heard of Old Joe for some time after the skipper puzzled the first mate with his little joke. It was in Detroit, several months later, that the story was again revived.

Bound from Chicago to Buffalo with a heaping cargo of wheat, the *Thomas J. Hall* was forced to put up for a few days in Detroit with engine trouble. It had been several weeks since the black gang had been on shore long enough for a complete debauch and the skipper violated the usual rules of freighter discipline by going into the quarters of the black gang himself instead of giving his orders through the mate.

"Shut up there with your gibbering and card playing and listen to this," he bawled through the door.

The yellow, swinging lanterns on the low ceiling showed his huge bulk filling the doorway.

"I want every one of you to be back at ten prompt Thursday an' no mistake. Mind that—no mistake."

Never was a black gang of a freighter more respectful to a captain than that of the *Thomas J. Hall* to Skipper King. For the skipper's fists backed up an exacting discipline that smacked more of the far salt seas than of the Great Lakes. Any seaman who didn't like the skipper could, of course, quit his job at the next port, but—well, hadn't the deckaroos once heard Inch Williams growl back under his breath at Skipper King? Aye, and hadn't they seen the skipper turn from half-way up the conning-tower with a snarl on his livid face like that of a maddened lion? Why, the fist of him nigh lifted Inch Williams off his clumpin' feet and dropped him a limp, battered hulk at the foot of the pilot house.

No, the skipper was no man to arouse. The black gang listened to him with due respect. It was understood as a matter of course that they should go to Detroit and get soddenly drunk, but at ten Thursday morning they were all back on deck, sullen and puffy-eyed—all back except Mike Clannahan, one of the three coal-heavers.

"And where's Mike?" the skipper asked of the first mate.

The skipper's tone was low with the softness of a blade swathed in silk.

The first mate didn't know just exactly, sir. He'd go right to the quarters of the black gang, sir, and see if he could find out. Probably just a bit late, maybe. And neither did the deckaroos and the coal-heavers know. Some one—le's see, who was that?—had seen him early that morning and then Mike had said he was goin' some place—can't just remember where—

"Ain't back, huh?"

The skipper's tone was still lower when the first mate returned to him with the definite report of Mike's absence.

Over a game of casino on Corney Fitzsimmons' bunk that evening, it was pretty

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thoroughly agreed by the black gang that Mike Clannahan would do better not to return at all. Or not to let himself be seen again by the skipper at the water-front of any of the Great Lakes ports. None of your soft, gentleman skippers, the old man wasn't—what he'd do to Mike!

But when the *Thomas J. Hall* cast anchor at Buffalo Mike Clannahan, a sheepish grin on his freckled face, was down at the docks to meet her.

"An' I suppose I ought to be speakin' to the second mate," he said to the old woman as he went aboard.

The old woman motioned below with her pipe.

"Mike, it's the old man hi'self you'll be wantin' to see! When he gets this wrought up he don't be botherin' with first and secon' mates."

Mike went fore and met the skipper coming out of the cabin.

"Ah, an' so ye're here, Mike? You're payin' us a bit of a visit?"

The captain's six feet of slashing brawn loomed tensely over the smaller man. The livid scar on his forehead was almost purple. One of the deckaroos who was swabbing the deck near by edged a few feet away, the while pretending a renewed application to duty.

"Yes, sorr, an' I was drunk."

"Well, now an' what a surprize! But do you happen to remember, Mike, a few remarks I made the morning you all went to Detroit?"

"Yes, sorr, that was just what I was going to explain. For sure I would have been back exceptin' for the circumstance, sorr, that I was delayed in helping a matey out of trouble. You see, sorr, it was like this: Like all the rest of us he'd been a bit tipsy the night before and you know what them murderin' Detroit police is? Yes, sorr, they picked him up and has him tight in jail before he had a chance to sober up. And he gets word to me to come down to the jail and lend him a bit of help. So I tells them at the jail how well he stands with you and what a good seaman he is and——"

"Here! Anchor that talk of yours a minute, Mike, and answer me this: What do you mean about a shipmate being in jail? You're the only man that didn't get back."

"Well, sorr," and Mike Clannahan's freckled face broke into an audacious grin, "and it was Old Joe. Poor old —— with but one good tooth in his head and they had him eatin' of dry toast there in the jail!"

Captain John King looked fiercely at the coal-passer for a long moment, his huge hands slowly relaxing. Then he suddenly turned and went toward the cabin.

"Go on with you, you lyin' Irishman!" he growled back over his shoulder. "Get aft and be at your coal. And don't be mixin' around with Old Joe any more—he's bad company for you."

From that moment on the permanence of Old Joe on board the *Thomas J. Hall* was assured. The first mate, his burly sides heaving with suppressed laughter, began a long yarn next day at the captain's table, a yarn which dealt with a fight between Old Joe and one of the crew of a Detroit ore-boat.

"And didn't I see the scrap myself?" the first mate defended himself against doubts.

At first with a wry smile, later with a widened grin, the skipper contributed details to the story as proof of the first mate's recital. Then the quartermasters joined in. Finally, even Hank Schweitzer, the first engineer, lost the blank, puzzled look on his heavy features and admitted that he, too, had seen Old Joe shortly after the fight.

"——! And what a black eye he got," he solemnly declared.

The *Thomas J. Hall* put out empty for Escanaba that night. During the entire voyage the conversation at the captain's table revolved about the bloody fight Old Joe had had at Buffalo. Details without end were improvised and each of them was greeted by a raucous gust of laughter.

It was not long until the black gang, too, began to discuss Old Joe. Mike Clannahan, who had always refused to tell how he escaped the captain's wrath at Buffalo, started it one night while the dishwasher was bringing in the black gang's supper.

"Now who'd 'a' thought that Old Joe would have lied to us that way?" Mike mediatated aloud, carefully wiping off one of the granite-ware dishes with his red handkerchief. "Yes, lied to us, he did. Just this morning I was fore on a little erran' and hears the first mate talking it over with the old man. Well, an' it seems that Old Joe really got licked in that fight with the deckaroo of the Detroit ore-boat,

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in Pin Boyle's place. Yes, the little, ratty-faced blighter licks him and then comes Old Joe to us tellin' how he got the best of it."

"And who's Old Joe?" Several voices made themselves heard in the question.

Mike Clannahan, aided by Corney Fitzsimmons—who, by this time, had penetrated the mystery of Old Joe by virtue of overhearing the talk at the captain's table—looked at the rest of the black gang in horrified amazement.

"An' such a crew you are as I never saw the like of before! Here you are, shippin' with Old Joe for weeks and a-saying you don't so much as know his name?"

The game lasted for several days. One by one, each of the black gang in time grasped the tacit rules of the imaginative pastime and joined in it with alacrity. Those who did not "catch on" were chaffed heavily and unmercifully. Finally, Ole, one of the firemen, remained as the only man in the black gang's quarters who was still puzzled by the endless tales of Old Joe. And at last even he burst out one afternoon in a terrific roar of laughter.

"Now, Ay tank Ay see bout Ol' Yoe," he shouted. "Ol Yoe yust ban talk!"

Only the old woman refused to take any part in the conversational sport which whiled away lamp-lit evenings on board the *Thomas J. Hall*.

"Go 'way with you and your Old Joe!" she would yell from the kitchen when Mike Clannahan, chuckling, would stop to tell her the latest imaginative effort.

Her freckled, muscular arms brandishing a rolling-pin in mock fury, she would say:

"It's downright spooky, all this talk about some one that never was. You'll see, and it'll bring bad luck to this ship yet."

Her fury and superstition were not altogether pretended when she found that Corney Fitzsimmons had taught the year-old child of hers—it could generally be seen in an amazingly dirty dress crawling about under the dishwasher's table—to say the name "Old Joe."

There seemed to be no rule of the game which barred the changing Old Joe's personality, age, position, size or disposition at the will of the teller. One story which occupied the black gang for three nights, and to which each man added details of lumpish pathos, was to the effect that Old Joe, now getting a bit "old and trembly," had been set upon in Duluth by three men from the *Willis L. Moore* and badly beaten.

"So old an' feeble he is now, mind you. An' ain't it a pity?"

At the very same time at the skipper's table the second mate had started a tale which concerned a bet made by Old Joe in Cleveland and a terrific feat of physical strength which won the bet for him.

"Well, it doesn't seem possible," one of the quartermasters added to the story, "but I seen him myself. Seen him in an elevator in Cleveland lifting seven of these hundred pound sacks of oats off the floor without so much as a grunt."

"Won three hundred dollars from the skipper of that Buffalo freighter, he did," Hank Schweitzer solemnly affirmed.

"No, and wasn't it four hundred?" asked the skipper. "Didn't Old Joe tell me about it with his own mouth?"

Late that night the argument was still raging as to how much Old Joe had won.

It did not seem in the least unreasonable when Old Joe was the second mate in one story and only the newest of coal-heavers in the next. Nor did it appear at all improbable to have him represented one time as a man of raging temper and at another time as too slow to take offense.

They were gala days when a new man joined the crew of the *Thomas J. Hall*. The initiate was surrounded as soon as possible by a group of strikingly innocent faces and told remarkable tales of Old Joe. He was never quite a full-fledged member of the crew until he could grin sheepishly, offer to buy the drinks at the next port, and add details to the next story of Old Joe's adventures.

Seamen from other freighters heard of Old Joe as glasses clicked on sloppy bars at Toledo or Escanaba or Chicago. More than one bruising fight resulted when some stranger to Old Joe became a bit too vehement in his doubts of the stories told him. It was not long until the renown of Old Joe had gone from Duluth to Buffalo.

THE Winter was ice-locked, the worst on shipping that Lake Michigan had known for a number of years. But the *Thomas J. Hall* had the reputation of being the last of them all to quit in the Fall and the first to begin in the Spring.

She dodged from Chicago to Milwaukee

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with a cargo of wheat. Not another Chicago-owned freighter would have tried it at that time of year. Hardly past Evanston, she was caught and almost crushed in the cruel, white jaws of an ice floe. Only skilful work of the quartermaster saved her.

She laid over for three days in Milwaukee while the bored crew loafed about the waterfront saloons and boasted about the intrepidity of the *Thomas J. Hall*. A thaw had set in and an ominous report could be heard from the lake now and then as the giant ice-floes began to break up. But the temperature dropped a vertical thirty degrees on Thursday and the crew of the *Thomas J. Hall* made hurried preparations for the homeward voyage.

It was bleak and cold as she set out from Milwaukee late Thursday afternoon and all the indications were for continued cold weather. As long as the cold held the ice-floes together there was the lane of water several miles from shore that was fairly free from ice.

"Aye, an' I'd like to see any of 'em follie the wake of the *Thomas J. Hall*," boasted Corney Fitzsimmons late that Winter afternoon, as the lights of Milwaukee were dripping fainter into the darkness.

None of the crew was later able to tell definitely just when and how the crash came. The engineer thought it was around about three o'clock while the second mate always swore that it was only a quarter until three. And Mike Clannahan afterward told us that neither of them was right. However that may be, the quartermaster claimed that it wasn't his doing, that he was steering right according to directions and should have got through nicely. But any one knows that a freighter is taking its chances on dodging the ice at that time of year.

"Faith, there was a ripping and a grinding and a tearing of wood and of steel that would have made you think the old *Thomas J. Hall* couldn't last another minute," Mike Clannahan afterward described it. "The old tub staggers over to starboard like she was sick drunk, and what with all of us being thrun outen of bunks by the big bump. There we lies end over end in the corner while it seems sure that she's goin' to turn turtle. Then, just like some drunk a-picking hi'self up from the sidewalk she staggers about in a dizzy way for a minute and finally half-way rights herself."

The lights were out. The black gang always declared that the old woman was first out of the cabins. Barefoot, clad in the overalls in which she had been sleeping, her thatch of red hair flying in the wind, she was roaring curses like a pirate, so they said. In another moment the skipper was on deck in his oilskins, waving a lantern about him.

A complete inventory of the situation was out of the question until daylight. When the first pallid bars of light streaked the east it was found that the *Thomas J. Hall* was caught on the outer edge of the field of ice-floes, held prisoner between two immense floes. She was just out of sight of the shore-line near Racine.

Badly battered—her leaks were not serious and had been repaired in a few hours during the night—listed far to starboard, she was in a narrow lane of water. One ice-floe, almost a quarter of a mile across, was up against her. Another, even larger, was forty feet away, across the lane of black water. Three miles or more of ice, open here and there, lay between her and the shore. One ice-floe, several acres in extent, stood between the freighter and escape out into the lake. She was held prisoner.

"If we can get to Racine and get a little help," the skipper muttered as he and the first mate surveyed the vast expanses of white ice in the pallid light of early dawn, "maybe we can get out. But if we don't an' if a stiff wind comes up from the east——"

Both silently looked at the huge floe—tons and tons of ice—which cut them off from the lake and which would crush the freighter as easily as if she were an egg shell if an east wind drove it in toward her.

The first mate, the first watch quartermaster and two of the crew put out as soon as it was light in the only life-boat the *Thomas J. Hall* carried. With the black gang leaning out of the port-holes and yelling chaffing messages to them, they rowed through a narrow lane of water wide enough only for a rowboat, and circled the floes until they were out in clear going. They went north, toward Milwaukee, until they were lost from sight in the pale, murky light of the Winter morning.

Their only chance was to get across the floes to shore at Racine. Milwaukee was too far to chance it unless the situation became more desperate. For if a wind came up the rowboat would stand little chance

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and the freighter would have been lost before help could come.

It was still and warm for the season—tiny flakes of snow floating through the air. The smoke from the one smokestack of the *Thomas J. Hall* rose straight upward in a thin, lazy curl. The noises from the boat sounded ominous and heavy in the dead, cold stillness of the miles and miles of ice about them. There was a dull, booming crash occasionally as an ice-floe split in the thaw.

The crew hung stolidly over the rail and watched the seemingly endless expanse of ice and listened to the nervous greedy swashing of the water in the narrow, black lane between the floes. From the kitchen could be heard the coarse, husky voice of the old woman talking to Mike Clannahan.

"—— you and your Old Joe! Didn't I always tell you that it would bring bad luck to the freighter some day?"

A flock of eager, lean birds flew over just before noon and lighted on the near-by ice-floe. Their curious chattering sounded overloud in the icy stillness. Corney Fitzsimmons cursed with angry impatience and dispersed them with a heavy bolt thrown from the rail.

After a silent dinner, during which the clatter of the knives and forks on ironware plates seemed to preclude any conversation, the black gang stayed below in their quarters. There was nothing but ice to see from the rail above. Some one started a morose game of casino. Then Mike Clannahan sauntered over and began the first extended conversation of the day.

"Just been for a-hearing the secon' mate talking to the skipper and hears that Old Joe has been picked to make it to Racine and get help. The first mate took him out in the lifeboat this morning and Old Joe swore he'd get there if he had to swim it or wade it. Well, if any one can get to Racine, Old Joe can."

"Sure Old Joe can. Why, when we was in Buffalo one time I heard Old Joe offer to bet that he could swim the rapids below the big falls."

"Don't it beat all how much nerve that man's got?"

"Ain't afraid of nothin'."

The dirty pack of cards was forgotten while the black gang told renewed stories of Old Joe. They told them with an eagerness, a wistfulness that they had never displayed before. They put more curses, more exaggerations, more swagger into their narratives than ever before. But under it all was a curious and feverish restlessness of mien. Waiting is hard on men.

The dusk was a strange, sulfur yellow through which the ice gleamed white as the first mate and his crew of three returned with the lifeboat. Tawny, threatening clouds were booming heavily across the descending sky. The skipper, up in the conning-tower watching the progress of the rowboat about the floes, moistened a finger and held it up over his head.

There was a touch of wind coming up—from the east. The lapping of the black water against the ice could be heard more distinctly. No flakes of snow could be seen now, and there was a clammy sting to the air.

The first mate reported. No —— use. Tried—hadn't he tried? Dragged the boat over the ice in twenty places trying to find a place to get to the shore. But there wasn't any. And you couldn't walk it. No! Man, you should have seen the gaps in it about half-way over! Man couldn't last five minutes on it. If it got colder, then, maybe. But this wind that's coming up from the east——

The old woman was in her oilskins, her thatch of red hair almost hiding her face, as she brought mess in to the black gang and set it, all in one bowl, on the table. She turned without a word and went out. But in the doorway she stopped, peered through the dim, yellow light of the one lantern hanging from the ceiling as if she were about to speak. But she said nothing.

The uneasy whimpering of the baby, that forlorn creature in its black-streaked dress, could be heard from the kitchen. And in another moment the hoarse voice of the old woman yelling at it.

The wind—from the east—was whipping the rigging by nine o'clock and the freighter, in its prison of white, leering ice, was beginning to roll from side to side with a slight, unsteady quivering. The waves were coming into the narrow lane between the floes with a steady, monotonous slash.

A game of casino had started in the black gang's quarters and the shuffle of each card could be heard in the room. The monosyllabic remarks of the players came out with a thick, tense sound. The second mate entered and called out a fireman and two

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of the deckaroos. Nothing was said but every one knew that the fate of the ship was to be decided in the next half an hour.

But it was only twenty minutes later that the three of them came back, their unshaven faces white with frost. The skipper was with them. Without a word he sat down on the edge of a bunk and watched the silent game of cards for a moment. It was the first time that he had ever seated himself in the quarters of the black gang.

"Well——"

Mike Clannahan took in a diamond when he could have made two spades.

"Well, sir, it don't look as if Old Joe were a-coming back. I'd bet a five that he got to Racine, then got into a saloon to warm up a bit, and—well, you know how Old Joe is for his drink—I bet he's there in Racine hog-drunk and forgetting all about us."

"That's likely it, Mike."

The skipper stood up in his stiffly rustling oilskins and there was the old, broad, strong-lipped grin on his red face.

"We all got to lick Old Joe when we get to Racine. And, now—let's get ready."

Every person on board the *Thomas J. Hall* was up on deck within twenty minutes—ready. Knotted together in a silent little group near the aft cabin they waited. The wind that drew sudden groans from the rigging above seemed to have a huge, vengeful personality. The air was moist and stinging. No one had said so in just as many words but every one knew that the tons of ice to the east of them were slowly bearing down upon them and that the *Thomas J. Hall* would be at the bottom before morning, a crushed, shapeless thing far down under the ice. And there were no captains or mates or engineers or Old Joes now; the tiny, living, helpless things that had so long made the *Thomas J. Hall* their home must take their chances together out on the ice-floes. A boat could not live in that wind. Some might escape out on the floes, for it was getting colder.

There was a timid, cringing moon that sometimes lighted dimly through the black scudding masses of clouds. It was, for the most part, a dark night. The crew, each man bundled up in everything warm he could put on, were dark shapeless masses to each other. The light from the captain's lantern, as he made his final trip back from the fore cabin, cast weird, swaying shadows.

The old woman, the whimpering child in her arms, was first to be lowered into the life-boat. She disappeared over the rail without a word. One scream from the baby could be heard above the smashing of the water against the sides of the freighter. The quartermasters and the engineers went next, followed by the second mate and two of the deckaroos, who were to row.

It was a half an hour before the life-boat returned. The going had been hard but its human freight had been safely landed on the largest and most solid of the near-by ice floes, a huge, white expanse acres in extent. There was room for all but two in the second boat-load. The captain and the first mate stayed behind. Mike Clannahan, a black mass of bundled garments, was last to get into the second boat-load and through the bullying wind he shouted back something to the skipper in which only the words "Old Joe" could be heard.

There were no prayers, no ceremonies, apparently no emotions of any kind.

It was rapidly growing colder.

The two deckaroos returned more than an hour later for the skipper and the second mate. The two of them went over the rail without a word and into the blackness of the Winter night without a backward look at the doomed *Thomas J. Hall*.

IT WAS clear and cold the next morning. The flurries of snow and the fog which had obscured the lake the day before were gone. The first frozen rays of the sun showed the tiny black dots that were the survivors of the *Thomas J. Hall* to the telescopes of the life-saving station. Within an hour there were new headlines in the Chicago newspapers and three ports on the Illinois and Wisconsin shores had put out rescue parties.

The old woman and the child were never found. One had to walk, walk to keep warm and it was thought that she became lost in the darkness and stepped off the floe into icy water. Corney Fitzsimmons went out in search of them during the night and he, too, never came back. Two of the deckaroos were never found.

All the others but the first mate were saved. Three of them were found together in a huddled, freezing group, like dumb, helpless sheep in a blizzard. Mike Clannahan's left hand was so badly frozen that two of the fingers had to be amputated in the hospital at Racine. Ole, the fireman,

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had been found alone, dangerously near the water's edge. Hank Schweitzer, the first engineer, would have frozen to death in another two hours, so the doctors said.

No one knew. It was thought that the life-boat had become lost on its third trip and had been unable to find the floe upon which it had landed its first two loads. The two deckaroos who were rowing it must have gone down with it for their bodies were never found.

They picked up the first mate, frozen to death, on an ice-floe a quarter of a mile north of the floe on which the first two boat-loads had been landed. Flat on the ice, an inert, huddled mass, was the skipper, about fifty yards away from the first mate. They had evidently become lost from each other in the darkness.

The captain's footsteps could be traced; first back and forth in a measured path until a trail had been worn in the ice, then in wide, unsteady circles, then in narrow, ever narrower, staggering circles. Only his tremendous body that enabled him to keep walking so long, saved him from the first mate's fate, so the doctors said.

When they got him in a hospital bed at Racine, burning up with a fever that kept him alternately fighting like a maniac and placid as a worn child for the next several weeks, the skipper revived into consciousness—or apparent consciousness—for a moment, and feebly asked—

"Where's Old Joe?"

The rescue parties were a bit perturbed and might have put out again in search of another victim if Mike Clannahan, in the same ward, hadn't explained to them the little joke of the *Thomas J. Hall.*

THAT was eleven years ago last Winter and the Hudson Navigation Company is still paying the old skipper of the *Thomas J. Hall* enough to keep him comfortable, and will until the end of his days.

You can go down to the new cement bridge across the river at Michigan Avenue and see him any day of the week. He is there for six or eight hours each day.

Except for his whiter hair and his frost-scarred hands, he is hardly changed in appearance from the days of the old *Thomas J. Hall.* He refuses to recognize the new, sleek steel and electric *Thomas J. Hall* which the Hudson Navigation Company launched three years ago. His shoulders are as brawny as ever, even if a bit stooped, and his skin is still the old wind-whipped red. It may be, of course, that his walk is not as erect and decisive as it used to be.

But it is in the eyes that you notice the difference. They are the timid, anxious eyes of a child; yet with something strangely lacking in the puzzled blue of them. They seem to be patiently and hopelessly reaching out for something that isn't there.

All the seamen out of work who make the bridge their loafing headquarters, all the North Side pedestrians, all the traffic police, all the bridge-tenders—even messenger boys know him. He has probably told all of them his halting, complaining story.

He spends part of his long days watching the tearing down of the old Rush Street bridge that once swung aside with deference to the incoming swagger of the *Thomas J. Hall.* The old bridge must have become part of the river itself to him. He sometimes turns to look vacantly and curiously at the throbbing torrent of flashing glass and steel that is Michigan Avenue hurtling by, an endless river of people. And maybe he hears the far-off, hoarse whistle of a freighter out on the lake and crosses recklessly through the traffic to the other side of the bridge, there to lean over the railing and shade his eyes with his hand.

"The *Thomas J. Hall?*" His voice has a curiously flat, empty ring.

"Nope." Some messenger boy grins at him.

If the old skipper isn't looking the boy may put a grimy finger to his head in significance and explanation. All the boys know his story.

"Not yet?"

The captain's lips recoil piteously at the corners and you notice more than ever the vacant, meaningless anxiety in the weary blue of his eyes.

"Old Joe," he mutters. "Old Joe's in Racine, gettin' drunker'n a hog. Been waiting a week for him. *Thomas J. Hall* sinking——"

Still muttering incoherently he crosses back to the other side of the bridge. For the last eleven years he had been waiting every day for the coming of Old Joe and the *Thomas J. Hall.*

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The Nine Unknown

A FIVE-PART STORY — PART IV

by

Talbot Mundy

Author of "Benefit of Doubt," "Treason," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

THE Rev. Father Cyprian aims at Hindu occultism. It was for that reason that he gave King, Grim, Ramsden and the others, access to books that no human eye should have seen.

There are other books which contain all the wisdom and secrets of the Nine Unknown, a mysterious order of India, and Father Cyprian *wanted* those books.

The Portuguese, da Gama, agreed to give up certain books he had.

But, doubting the Portuguese's good faith, the seven sons of Ali were appointed to follow him.

The others went to the Star of India, a hotel kept by Diomed Bragansa. A search of da Gama's room revealed the fact that it had been recently raided.

Going up on the roof they were joined by Ali.

Ali's seven sons soon joined them and confessed that they had failed to keep in touch with da Gama. Six of them blamed the seventh for their failure.

"Beat him," said Ali.

But the noise and disturbance of the beating aroused the anger of all the roof-top dwellers and shouts of, "They are spies!—They are Government agents! *Bande Materam!*" were answered by the shouts of Ali and his brood.

Then, when the fighting was at its fiercest came another cry—

"Fire!"

The smoke billowed upward and screams arose from the people jammed in the stair-head.

Escaping from this death-trap, they went to the house of Gauri, a woman who was known to be in the confidence of da Gama. She agreed to lead them to a place where he might be found.

And in an old deserted temple, underneath a pile of débris, they found da Gama—dead!

RETURNING with the bad news to Father Cyprian—leaving the sons of Ali to keep watch outside—they surprized Manoel, the butler, eavesdropping. At the same time word came that the sons had disappeared.

"Allah! My sons gone?" cried Ali, and all save Grim and Cyprian trooped after Ali to the rescue.

Now this is what had happened to the six:

Diomed, recognizing them as the men who had caused the disturbance at his hotel, ordered a constable to arrest them.

Seeing a man in a yellow garment beckoning them, the six ran off, and the constable arrested Diomed and took him to prison.

And so they all came to the police station. The yellow man and Ali's sons; the constable and his prisoner; Narayan Singh, Ali, Jeremy and Ramsden.

The yellow man had cunningly led the six there in order to proffer false charges against them. But Jeremy defeated his plan; the yellow man was arrested and put in the cell already occupied by Diomed. Three of Ali's sons were put there also.

In the mean time Grim had succeeded in getting a confession from Manoel. He had been hired by the Nine to steal Father Cyprian's books. And then entered three men dressed in yellow smocks. One carried a long silk handkerchief in his right hand. Grim stepped back instead of forward—his blood chilled. Except for Grim's activity there had hardly been a motion visible and yet—the handkerchief had changed hands. The executioner had missed.

"We want all of your books," said one of the yellow men.

"I win," Grim exclaimed suddenly, and, as he spoke, the door burst open and Ramsden led the rest into the room.

And then a deadly gas filled the room.

"It is death," screamed Chullunder Ghose.

The three yellow men were thrust down a cellar, and the babu kicked the handkerchief from which emanated the deadly gas, down among them.

But the gas had already got in its deadly work. Narayan Singh and Father Cyprian collapsed.

Meanwhile, in the prison cell the three sons of Ali, deciding that the yellow man was the cause of their incarceration, killed him. And then came three other yellow men who killed Diomed and ordered the prison guard to release the men of the North.

This was done and one of the yellow men, first warning them that the time would come when they must pay for the service rendered, bade them depart.

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And so the three returned to Cyprian's.

The old man was in a bad way. So too was Narayan Singh. It occurred to King that the three yellow men in the cellar would have an antidote to the poison, and Ramsden opened the trap-door in order to question them.

He found that they had set fire to all the books which had been stored there and, in the ensuing fight, two of the yellow men were killed.

"Take Cyprian somewhere and get a good doctor for him," Grim ordered. "Ali, you and your sons guard the prioner until we find a good place to hide him."

AND now Cyprian's allies seemed to be emeshed in a sea of intrigue; men in orange-yellow robes seemed to be everywhere.

King, Grim, and Ramsden, aided by Chullunder Ghose, succeeded in convincing their prisoner that they were members of the Nine, and so secured information which led them to believe that there were other organizations working against the mysterious order.

Habibullah, one of Ali's sons, pretended to side with certain of the yellow-robed men and accepted the bribe they offered. He was to let them in to the hiding-place of his allies so that they could kill at leisure. Habibullah planned to double-cross the agents of the Nine but, at the critical moment, failed, and it was Narayan Singh who met them and, after a bloody fight, killed them all.

Then, beset on all sides by men in yellow-robes, uncertain as to what course to pursue, some of the allies went to the house of Bhima Ghandava, an old friend of Father Cyprian's—unknown to King, Grim and Ali.

CHAPTER XV

"Abandon CAN'T and CANT all ye who enter here!"

"WE'RE no good!"

Athelstan King was spokesman, on a cushion on the office floor with his shoulders wedged into the corner and Grim facing him, on another cushion, backed against the desk. King was suffering from ex-officialitis, a disease that gets men harder in proportion to their length of service. His best work had been done without the shadow of officialdom—over the border, where the longest purse, the longest wit, and the longest knife are Law—but that had not preserved him from official commendation afterwards, which is a poison more subtle than cocaine.

Grim, on the other hand, had never been praised by any one except his enemies, and by them only for ulterior purposes.

"I feel good," said Grim, yawning and keeping an eye on the prisoner, who was blindfolded and tied behind the desk.

"Phah! *Melikani!*"* remarked Ali of Sikunderam, sitting son-less and despondent with his back against the door. "Moreover, shaven and unmarried! What do *you* know of life's bitterness?"

"Nothing!" Grim agreed. "Life's sweet."

"I have lost my son—my best son!" Ali grumbled. "Allah is Lord of Mercies, but my Habibullah was a jewel too good to die."

They had heard that a dozen times at least between the night that seemed a thousand years away and morning that was just beginning to describe how villainously filthy was the office window. They spared their comments.

"I dare not claim the body, but the *Wakf*† will bury it, which is *something*."

Narayan Singh, his black beard resting on his chest, woke out of a reverie and seemed to consider Ali for the best part of a minute.

"Unless your remaining sons are more wakeful and alert than pigs that perish, they will be even as Habibullah," he said presently.

"Pigs?" Ali bridled at the word. Nerves were on edge that morning. "My sons are posted all about us as the eyes of angels! What do you mean by pigs?"

"I go to see how many of them sleep," the Sikh answered. "Let me pass."

Ali moved away from the door ungraciously and as slowly as he dared. If the Sikh had only weighed a little less—had only lacked an inch or so of reach—had only a shade less courage and a shorter list of dead men to his credit—there would have been a fight that minute. As it was, there was only a delay while Ali removed his mat, lest the Sikh's foot subject it to defilement. Narayan Singh strode out, and Ali slammed the door behind him with violence that made the clouded-glass pane rattle.

"We erred in demeaning our society, admitting persons without *izzat*,"‡ he announced to whom it might concern.

"*Chup!*" said King and Grim together—a very rude word in the circumstances.

Neither of them cared who knew that Narayan Singh might have their blood and bank accounts to back him for the asking.

"There's dust in my lungs!" announced King. "This office building is a fire-trap. If the enemy marked us down they'll burn

*American.

†Moslem charitable fund.
‡Honor. (There is no exact equivalent.)

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the whole block. We'll have drawn ill fate on to the heads of a hundred people—or more. Suppose we move on."

"Where to?" Grim objected. "How will Rammy and Jeremy find us? This was the rendezvous."

"Was! If they were alive they'd be here."

"Life's longer than that," Grim objected. "Then there's Chullunder Ghose——"

King interrupted, smiling with a tired, wry face—not cynical, but sorry, because of the probabilities:

"They've caught him with the ox-cart. There must be a million ways to get into trouble with that contraption. We shouldn't have sent him."

"But we did," Grim answered. "Here's our place until some one shows up."

King knew that. Left to himself he would never have suggested any other course. Had he doubted Grim he would never have voiced his own doubts. But there is comfort in the privilege of pouring forth unwisdom to be contradicted. He had been that kind of rebuttal-witness for many a good man in the toils of discouragement. It was his turn.

"Oh go to ——!" he answered wearily.

For an hour after that they sat in silence, listening to the brassy ticking of the export-clock—the quarreling of birds along the roof-edge—all the noises that an Indian population makes in getting ready for the day—unpleasant noises for the most part from the Western view. Alternately they slept by fits and starts, but there was always one of them awake, and all three instantly caught the rhythm of Narayan Singh's returning feet. Ali opened the door for him unbidden, forgetful already of the dawn's resentment.

"And the boys—my sons——?"

"Are awake *now!*" the Sikh assured him, and faced the others to announce his news.

"There are tales in the street of an ox-cart, driven by a god some say—some name the god—wandering all night about the city. The *bunnias* laugh, but the crowd is saying it portends events. Men say the oxen were as big as elephants, and the cart like the Car of Jaggernath! They say it means India will rise and free herself!"

"Has the hour come for the North then?" wondered Ali, plucking at his knife.

"If six men of the North stay awake, I think none in yellow can pass them. But if the enemy should come in pink or green—above all green—" Narayan Singh went on.

"My sons are *not* fools!" Ali countered hotly, getting to his feet.

But Narayan Singh took little notice of him.

"If a man in green came, asking for the whereabouts of friends of Father Cyprian, I think our six would let him through unchallenged——"

"You lie! By Allah, in your beard, you lie!" said Ali with his left hand on his long knife, thrusting the hilt outward.

"I *think* the man in green is past the inner-guard already," said Narayan Singh, with his ear cocked for the outer passage but his eye on Ali's weapon.

"A man with green silk lining to his long cloak, and on his forehead a caste-mark such as I never saw—two triangles, one on the other. A man with a woman's smile——"

"My sons would gut him!" Ali swore.

BUT Narayan Singh opened the door. A man who answered well enough to the description walked in with the considerate deference of one who needs defer to nobody. The smile was a woman's, as the Sikh had said, and the face a preserver of secrets, although sunnily handsome. Nothing that that man wanted to conceal would ever become news. He told nothing—gave away nothing, except that he was something of a dandy and comparatively well-to-do. The caste-mark on his brow—two yellow triangles one on the other—told nothing; one could not even guess whether he was Hindu or Mahommedan; his eyes were like a Parsi's, and his costume was a compromise—European shoes for instance, and imported socks showing under the green-lined old-gold cloak.

"Friends of Father Cyprian?" he asked, glancing from face to face.

There was no challenge in his glance, and no fear. He did not see a prisoner in yellow peeping at him from around the desk, but Ali did.

King got off the floor and advanced toward him.

"We're anxious for news of Cyprian," he said.

"I was told to bring three *sahibs*—Grim, King, and Narayan Singh."

"By whom? To bring us where?" King asked.

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"By Father Cyprian. As to where—that is——"

He hesitated, giving King full opportunity to frame whatever speech he had in mind. And King flung irresolution to the winds:

"Fact is, we're afraid to be seen on the streets," he confessed. "There were incidents last night. Arrest would be inconvenient. We——"

"I have a closed car," the newcomer announced.

But that eased no anxieties. A closed car outside an office in that narrow street would only arouse curiosity. The first inquisitive policeman would learn the car's number, after which to trace its course through Delhi would not call for much ingenuity.

But the anonymous messenger told where he had left the car, which of itself was proof that he could only come from friends. Then within the minute, leaving Ali to guard their prisoner and gather the somnolent sons beneath his wings, King, Grim and Narayan Singh were in full flight by the private route, through the warehouse where men dealt in wholesale drugs and outlawed politics—out by a back-door to another street—across that to a sub-cellar gambling-den, whose lawless owner could not afford to tell tales—out by a window into a yard—across the yard into a shed where a Jew swapped camels and was hand-in-glove with all illicit traffickers—through his side-door into a blacksmith's shop, and out of that into a street where a big closed Daimler with crimson curtains waited. It looked like a Maharajah's car, but lacked the royal insignia, and there was no small platform up behind for footmen.

"If your honors please——"

The suave guide, holding his cloak to show as little of the green lining as might be, bowed them in, followed, and slammed the door—which was signal and direction; for without a word said, a driver who looked like a Gourkha but wore spectacles, started away at the highest speed conceivable in those thronged, narrow streets.

In fifteen minutes, by the grace of Those who guide the comets in their wild ellipse, having hit nothing, killed nobody, he blew his horn in the throat of a *cul-de-sac;* and by the time they reached the end of it a great gate opened, admitting them without reducing speed.

They could hear the great gate slam, and the clang of iron bars that fell in place, but could only see ahead because of the crimson curtains. And ahead was nothing but the whitewashed stall the car belonged in, wide open to receive it. They came to a standstill with the front wheels on its threshold.

But their guide opened the near-side door and they stepped out into a garden of half an acre in which a fountain played. A house, that certainly had been a temple not so long ago, stood face to the fountain, and there were flowers everywhere—in hanging baskets—in niches where perhaps the images of gods had been—on steps and balconies, in windows, on a score of ledges, on the roofs raised one above the other—and in masses to right and left of the driveway and the walk that curved between the fountain and the house.

They were thirty yards away from a pillared portico that shaded the house-entrance. Rioting colors, the splash of water and the sunlight on ancient masonry, the quiet, the coo of doves, and that peace that comes from absolute proportion of design, united to make them feel in another world, or else on another plane in this one. The assurance of their guide completed the effect. Unquestionably he was confident of introducing them to wonders.

"Please feel at home," he said, smiling. "There should be a sign over this doorway adapted from the famous warning above the gate of Dante's Hell—Abandon CAN'T and CANT all ye who enter here! Another mystery? Ha-ha! You will understand it after breakfast."

Breakfast! They could smell new-roasted coffee and hot rolls! They were willing to abandon almost anything that instant. Only manners checked a stampede!

"I would burn a city for half such impulse!" swore Narayan Singh. "My belly yearns like a woman for her lover!"

But a man came forward in the portico to greet them, who might have checked a royal progress. Not that there was evidence of majesty about him, or of potential violence. There was nothing whatever forbidding in his whole surroundings. He might have been the spirit of the place, but his smile was compact of all the manly elements, and hate omitted.

He was middle-sized, more than middle-aged and yet so hale and well preserved that his age was difficult to guess. Nor was his nationality determinable, although like

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his messenger he wore distinctly oriental clothes—a costume made of compromises for the sake of comfort—Hindu on the whole. But he wore no caste-mark. There were no twin triangles on his brow beneath the plain white turban.

His beard, and, as presently appeared, his hair, were iron-gray, not long but affluent and carefully groomed. Hands, face, forehead were netted with tiny wrinkles that seemed to have been smoothed out rather than caused by time; the impression was that he was growing young again, after having faced the worst the world could do to him. Great hunters, great explorers, great law-givers, great sailors have such lines as his. He knew. He had looked in the jaws of infinitely worse than death and had not flinched. Fear for himself had no hold on him. Therefore he was lord of all he surveyed, and not proud, because pride is foolish, whereas he had humor. The humor shone forth from his eyes. Ease made her home with him.

"Please feel welcome," he said in English. "I am Bhima Ghandava, and this is my house. Your friends are up-stairs. Your wonderful ox-cart is in my stable, the oxen have been fed, and so have your friends and their prisoner. As soon as you have washed you will find breakfast waiting. After that I am sure you would rather talk than sleep, although the sleep would do you more good, so please come to the library."

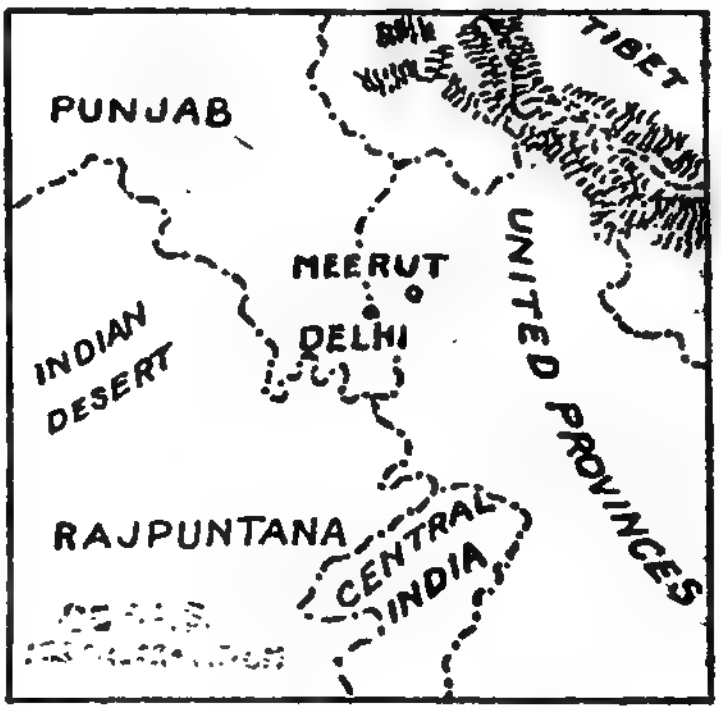
There was nothing to do but accept his invitation and follow his green-lined *chela** into a place where marble, cool water, soap, towels, and the bathroom smell made life for the moment no longer a dream but an exquisite luxury.

The white man *thinks* the bath is a religion peculiar to himself. The English made a privileged Order of it centuries ago, and it *is* the only creed that the whole West can agree on. But it also is the one lone recognizable common denominator by which West and East may understand each other in the end—the outward and visible product of an inborn yearning to be clean. There was no difference between Grim's and King's devotion to the ritual and Narayan Singh's, except perhaps the Sikh enjoyed his most.

Then rolls and coffee on white table-linen in a chamber in which priests had kept the Mysteries before men forgot what such things are and what simplicity must go with them.

An atmosphere outlives the men who made it. It is easy to feel lawless in a smugglers' den—brave and determined 'tween-decks in a ship just home from drifting in the polar ice. It was easy to feel then and there that the hatch was off the hold of the impossible and all things waited for accomplishment by them who dared, and knew. There was a sense of being in the very womb of faultless Destiny.

"I would trade my whole accomplishment and all my medals, just to know I was worthy to sit here!" said Narayan Singh piously—then set his teeth into a buttered roll and washed a titanic mouthful down with coffee that smelt of paradise.



There were no attendants. The messenger in green-lined finery whom their host had called his *chela* vanished when he had shown them where to go. None intruded on their privacy until the food was all devoured, and even then it was an old acquaintance who burst in on them, weary-eyed and as contented as a bear among the honey-pots.

"*Sahibs!* Exquisite adventure! Luck at last! Gods whom we have long offended have forgiven us! We are in house of holy adept, whose tobacco is as perfect as his point of view! I swear, thou swearest, he swears! I drink, thou drinkest, he drinks! Rammy sahib consumed one quart of imported stout at seven A.M. Jeremy *sahib* had whisky-soda. Me, I had drunk cognac,

*Disciple.

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contrary to caste and precedent. Am intoxicated with exuberance! Ghandava sahib drank gin—I am sure—I saw him! He does all things same as everybody. *Sahibs*, secret is, he doesn't *give* a ——! He knows too much! He is incorporated essence of accumulated ancient knowledge! Ask him anything—I bet he knows it! He put oil on Rammy sahib's injuries that has made him feel like pigs in clover. You, you incredulate—but me, I know a good thing when I see same. I want somebody to bet with!"

Chullunder Ghose sat down cross-legged where a shaft of golden sunshine quivered between the slats of a shutter, and fanned himself with a handkerchief.

"Am commanded to escort you three *sahibs* to *sanctum sanctorum* soon as gorges rise at thought of further rations. Personally I ate nine rolls and drank a gallon. Emulate me. There is lots more!"

They followed him up stone stairs worn by the tread of ancient feet—stairs set in the heart of the masonry by builders who had no need to economize in labor or material, and passed between what once had been the priests' rooms, walking on rugs whose origin was Asia from Monogolia to Damascus. At the end of one long passage was a door at least a foot thick carved with the stories of the gods; Chullunder Ghose thumped that with both fists. It opened at once, as if by a hidden mechanism.

They found themselves in what was probably the largest room in the building. It opened by means of high windows on a deep veranda banked with flowers, and its ceiling was vaulted in four sections, with one pillar in the midst to support the inner ends of all four arches. Somewhere were hidden ventilators through which fans drove cool air; the purr of the fans was dimly audible and, just as with Ghandava's costume, there was enough modernity about the place to provide comfort without sacrificing any aspect worth preserving.

The deep, long window-seats, for instance, were upholstered in brocaded cloth, and the stone floor was spread with several layers of rugs. There were books wherever shelves could be fitted between projecting portions of the masonry; and an enormous toucan, neither caged nor chained, sat perched on a bracket projecting from one wall, looking futuristic.

Bhima Ghandava himself rose out of an overstuffed leather armchair to greet them. Ramsden was sprawling in another one. Jeremy sat cross-legged on a divan in a corner near the big bird, whose phonetics he was trying at intervals to imitate. The prisoner, unbound, sat like a big bronze idol on the floor with his back to the window; and Chullunder Ghose resumed the perch he had left at one end of a window-seat. Cyprian was not in sight, but there was a sound of book-leaves quickly turning that suggested him.

"Please be at home," smiled Ghandava.

THEY collapsed into deep armchairs, but Narayan Singh gave up the effort to feel comfortable in his and after a minute squatted on the floor instead, with his back against it. Bhima Ghandava resumed the window-seat *vis-à-vis* to Chullunder Ghose, and then—as if he might have been watching through a peephole for the proper moment—the green-lined *chela* entered, addressed him as "most reverend *guru*,"* asked whether he needed anything, and was dismissed.

It was conceivable—although not certain by a thousand chances—that that little incident had been designed on purpose to suggest the proper attitude of deep respect. Perhaps the *chela* had himself conceived it to that end. Ghandava was not in need of the sort of mechanism that surrounds mere royalty. He provided his own atmosphere.

"I am trying to make this prisoner feel at home, too," he said with an air of comical regret, "but he seems to yearn for brimstone and red-hot coals! This is too tame!"

The bronze man sat immobile. Not a feature moved. His wrists were unbound but he had crossed his arms over his breast and held them so as if hypnotized. The proud smile on his thick lips seemed to have been frozen there. He hardly seemed to breathe. He did not blink. When King, grim and Narayan Singh entered he did not as much as glance at them. He was like a dead man at a feast.

"He imprisons himself!" said Ghandava. "You see before you the embodiment of fear and not the slightest need for it. No combination of physical terrors could reduce him to that condition. He is self-hypnotized. He is afraid with a fear that is within himself—that he has cultivated in himself—that he has used to govern others.

*Teacher.

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Dynamite could hardly loosen it. What shall we do with him?"

That was hard to answer.

"He's the head of their gang, and he's dangerous," said Jeff.

"To whom?" Ghandava asked. "He seems safe to us at present!"

Whereat Cyprian piped up, emerging from behind the only detached bookcase in the room, wiping spectacles and looking as if he had been cataloging all his life.

"You are right!" he said sharply. "He is only a danger to his friends. I say, release him!"

Ghandava glanced at Jeff, whose fist had done the capturing. By right of *lex non scripta** the decision was up to him. But Jeff, though an irresistible force when his mind is made up, is no leaper at blind conclusions or interpreter of men's minds. His forte is common sense, applied.

"Stow him incommunicado, while we talk," he suggested, and that was carried by acclamation.

Bhima Ghandava summoned the green-lined *chela* by means of an electric bell.

"Such arrogant simplicity! How simple are the great! He who could *think* and be obeyed! To use a common bell—such meekness!" exclaimed Chullunder Ghose, rolling his eyes in an ecstasy.

Bhima Ghandava explained what was required. The *chela* addressed remarks to the prisoner, who took no more notice of them than the image of Buddha would if a fly had rested on it. King leaned over and prodded Chullunder Ghose in the stomach with a pole meant for closing windows.

"Less emotion!" he commanded.

Jeff hove himself out of his chair and seized the prisoner under the arms.

"Lead the way," he said simply.

But as if the threat of violence and the contact physical were all that were needed to resolve the prisoner's fear, he instantly began to struggle, springing upright as if Jeff's touch had released a spring, and smiting Jeff with his clenched fist three times running between the eyes. Jeff reeled backward and then, closing with him, had to fight like Samson to save his neck from breaking; for the bronze man got him by a hold below the arms and, spinning him upside-down, crashed his head against the floor and set his foot on the bent neck. It was only three layers of rugs that saved Jeff from being killed.

For once "Rammy old top" was in the hands of a stronger adversary. Though he swept the man's legs together with one arm and threw him, thereafter using every artifice he knew, sending home punch after terrific punch when opening offered, he could not pin his adversary down. His previous injuries, though rendered nearly painless by Ghandava's oils, were a handicap. Each sledge-hammer blow that his opponent landed, each volcanic wrench at Jeff's arms and legs, made matters worse.

The end could have only been postponed for seconds. The others began to rush to Jeff's assistance. Even Chullunder Ghose was on tip-toe to plunge into the fray, and Cyprian lay down his spectacles to look for something heavy. But Ghandava's outstretched hand kept all of them, *chela* included, standing back, they not knowing what he meant to do, yet certain he could command the situation in a second when he chose. Even Cyprian expected it, and laid down the heavy brass vase he had picked up.

But for half-a-minute the pace was too quick for Ghandava, or so it seemed. Jeff and his prisoner twisted and writhed like bears at war in Spring-time. The bronze man hurled Jeff clear, sprang to his feet again, seized a wrought-iron cobra meant to hold a lamp and lifted it to brain him.

The thing weighed about two hundred pounds, and Jeff's forearm, raised to intercept it, would have smashed like kindling.

YET it was Ghandava's hand—smooth, soft palm upward—that met the full force of the blow, arresting it midway—a hand that looked as if it could not lift the bronze snake, let alone resist it! And he said one word, in Sanskrit possibly, at least in an unknown tongue, that seemed to stiffen the prisoner again from head to foot, so that he stood transfixed with the heavy bronze thing in his hands, arrested in mid-motion.

"Now take him away," he said quietly; and instead of Jeff the *chela* touched him. The giant set down the iron cobra and followed the *chela* like a man in a dream—out through a door, at the end of the room, that closed on both of them.

"If we use force in *their* way they can

*Unwritten law.

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conquer us," Ghandava said almost apologetically. "It was what you know as luck, friend Ramsden, that enabled you to capture him last night. You took him by surprize, or he would have twisted you as a basket-maker twists the reeds between his hands. The same with every other force they use; if you stand up against it, it will flatten you. You saw me then? What I did was to redirect his energy. If I had turned it inward it would have destroyed him. Instead, I used it to arrest that iron weight in mid-career—used his energy, not mine. It is only a question of knowledge."

"Like riding a horse?" suggested Jeremy. "But how? Tell you what, sir, I'll swap you! Show me that trick, and I'll teach you any two you like of mine!"

Ghandava laughed merrily and got back to his place on the window-seat.

"I rather doubt my need to know your tricks," he answered, "and to learn mine, if you care to call them tricks, would take more years than you believe you have at your disposal. Besides—how should I dare to teach you, if I could?"

"Why not?" asked Jeremy. "I'm not a crook."

Ghandava smiled again.

"Few of us are what we think we are," he answered. "You—all of you—are on what Hindus call the Wheel. You are tied to Destiny, the agents of it, bound in your appointed places. Every star—planet—meteorite—each speck of dust that swings into view does so in obedience to law. Order is the first law. None can escape his destiny."

"Ah! Now we all get fortunes told! I shiver on brink of expectancy! Am I to be plutocrat? To go to jail? To travel overseas? To be distinguished personage?"

"You're going to be prodded in the belly!" King assured him.

"Ouch! *Sahib*, there should be a law against this! Cease!"

"If I could tell fortunes, do you think I would?" Ghandava asked.

Cyprian, with his thumb between the pages of a black book, came toward the window and a chose a high-backed chair in which he could sit without doubling up like a rag doll. He preferred dignity to any kind of comfort.

"To be brief with you, Ghandava," he said, as if calling a meeting to order, "we are all in your debt for princely hospitality. Is there more we may expect of you? Our purpose is to expose the Nine Unknown. We want the secrets of the Nine Unknown—their books—their treasure——"

"Their treasure!" sighed Chullunder Ghose.

"Their treasure and their knowledge!" Grim agreed.

"Their books!" said Cyprian. "Can you help us?"

"Can I, do you mean, or will I?" asked Ghandava.

He smiled as if he found the situation funny.

CHAPTER XVI

"Sahibs, that is a true speech!"

Ghandava began to pace the floor with hands behind him.

"To begin with, nothing is impossible!" he said, with an abruptness that made Cyprian blink.

Chullunder Ghose sighed like an epicure in presence of his favorite dish, deftly avoiding King's attentions with the window-pole. King was in favor of hard facts and no delirium.

"Does it strike any of you that this account of the Nine Unknown is ridiculous?" Ghandava asked.

"Not in the least!" said Jeremy promptly, and the others nodded.

"We *know*," said Cyprian.

"Da Gama told us," said Chullunder Ghose.

"They've persecuted us ever since we took the field against them," said Narayan Singh.

"That is what appears to me ridiculous," Ghandava answered. "You presume a body of nine men, inheritors, as you describe them, of the scientific secrets of the ancients. You credit these nine with such wisdom that according to you they have been able to accumulate enormous quantities of gold at regular intervals for thousands of years without any one discovering either its hiding-place or their method. Yet you say they have persecuted *you* without success. How do you propose to account for their alleged success along one line, and their rather clumsy series of failures along another? Do the two accounts appear to you compatible?"

"They don't," Grim said. "We decided yesterday that those who are attacking us

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probably belong to a different organization."

"Does it occur to you," Ghandava asked, "that these Nines who have attacked you are themselves in search of the real Nine?"

"That had occurred to this babu," Chullunder Ghose admitted self-complacently, with his hands folded across his stomach.

"Why didn't you tell us then?" King demanded.

"Belly being tender part of my anatomy, have said nothing that might provoke assault on same," the babu answered with both eyes on King's prodding pole.

Jeremy produced the three coins that remained from Da Gama's original treasure trove. He passed them to Cyprian, who handed them to Ghandava.

"Those look like evidence to me," said Jeremy.

"Don't forget," said King, "we've another prisoner in the office, who swears he was told off to kill a member of the real Nine in Benares."

Ghandava nodded, but Cyprian joined issue with him.

"Why believe what *he* says? The organization is a series of Nines, each member of a Nine being himself a captain of another Nine and so on. I am entirely satisfied on that point. Thus, the only means of control or of investigation is from the top. Da Gama said so. One Nine knows nothing of another. For all we know the Nine Unknown may be at war with one another. A subordinate told off to murder one of the Principals might say in honest ignorance——"

Ghandava interrupted him with a gesture.

"Doubt from the unexpected quarter! I see I must explain," he said; but he paused for almost a minute, His next words were dramatic—

"I am myself commissioned by the Nine Unknown!"

For a second there was silence. Then—

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Cyprian.

Ghandava laughed. Cyprian crossed himself unostentatiously. The others betrayed astonishment tinged with incredulity, except that Narayan Singh and Chullunder Ghose, while surprized into speechlessness, looked disposed to credit almost anything.

Ghandava on the whole seemed not displeased with the reception of his statement.

"The 'Nine Unknown' are known to themselves by another name; and by yet another name to their few confidants; but they *do* exist, and they *are* the inheritors of *all* the scientific knowledge of the ancients," he went on.

"And the gold that has vanished in the course of centuries? Are they inheritors of that?" asked Ramsden.

"My friend, if I should know the secrets of the Nine, does it occur to you that I would tell them?" Ghandava answered.

"Their books! Their books!" Cyprian muttered, and Ghandava took that up with him.

"Others have wanted those. They who burned the library at Alexandria did so in order to secure them, and that was when men's memories were fresher than they are now. *They* failed, as all others have done. The Emperor Akbar tried to get the books. He plundered India for them. But he died in ignorance of their whereabouts, although in those days some of them were kept within an hour's walk of Akbar's palace."

"Then *you* know where they are now!" Cyprian said excitedly. He could keep neither lips nor fingers still.

"My friend, I have just returned from extensive travels. I know *nothing*, beyond that the Nine sent for me and that I have been commissioned to perform a duty."

"Where are the Nine now?" Cyprian asked him, and Ghandava laughed.

"We wander from the subject," he replied. "These spurious Nines, whose organization you describe, have existed for centuries. They seek the undiscoverable secrets of the Unknown Nine. Their own secrets are mere hypnotism, mere trickery, mere evil hidden under the mask of Kali-worship, Thuggee and what not else. In the place of Knowledge they have grafted superstition, and in place of Truth, fear. They rule by fear, over- and under-riding the law by keeping the custodians of public peace in a constant state of fear of them. They have nothing whatever in common with the Nine who have commissioned me, and who are altruists—simply."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Cyprian. "I mean—pardon me, I beg to differ! If they were altruists, and have the knowledge you pretend, they would reveal it to the world——"

"For the world's undoing!" Ghandava added dryly.

"How can the world be undone by useful knowledge?" King objected.

"Or how can there be too much treasure?"

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asked Chullunder Ghose. "Let loose even the dogs of war—devouring monsters!—and give me money enough— This babu will buy the victory for either side! If your principals have all that money, why didn't they buy the best side in the late fracas of 1914 and finish the business swiftly? Ouch! King sahib, I beseech you, lay the pole down!"

"Why do they not now buy India's liberty?" Narayan Singh demanded. "The British tax-payer——"

"Who ever purchased liberty?" Ghandava answered. "Liberty is earned, or it ceases to exist!"

"Then what are they hoarding gold for?" Ramsden demanded.

"Altruism?" asked Cyprian with raised eyebrows and wrinkled forehead, looking over his spectacles. "Is there no need of altruism yet?"

Ghandava fell back on his smile.

"You assume too much," he answered. "Altruism has nothing to do with selfishness."

"Then your people are not altruists in any recognized sense of the word!" snapped Cyprian.

The old man was getting more and more impatient, possibly because he felt the control of the situation and of the party slipping from his grasp. Yet it was he who had introduced Ghandava. There was not much he could do about it.

"You mean their altruism is not recognized?" Ghandava answered. "You assume that the gold that has disappeared for centuries is all accumulated in one place and lying useless? I think I can assure you that is not so."

"But the knowledge?" King objected.

"The books!" insisted Cyprian.

Ghandava smiled again and pointed a finger at Cyprian.

"You, my friend, would burn the books if you could find them! Akbar, if he had found them, would have used the knowledge they contain for the carving of new empires. Those who burned the library of Alexandria would have done at least that. Those whom you call 'my people' have their own interpretation of the books and their own opinion of their proper use."

"But knowledge," King objected again, "if knowledge is true it can't do harm, can it?"

"No? Of what is dynamite the product? Of no knowledge?" Ghandava retorted. "Was it ignorance that built the big guns and invented poison-gas?"

"The money! The money! Where is the money?" Chullunder Ghose exclaimed excitedly.

"Gold is not money. Gold is gold," Ghandava replied. "Tell me—is humanly comprehensible energy continuous without fuel? Energy must be released—is that not so? Water—coal—petroleum—the tides—harnessing, you call it. Did it never strike you there is more energy contained in a ton of gold than in a million tons of coal? Does that open any vistas? Do you see that to squander gold as money would be only to debauch the world, which is already too debauched, whereas gold's energy released in proper ways might change the very face of nature? I am telling you no secrets. All the chemists know what I am hinting at. They don't know how to release the energy from gold or uranium or thorium, that's all."

"And you?" They chorused the question. He ignored it.

"These Nines, who are variously disguised as anarchists and Kali-worshipers, know very well that the day of gold *as money* is past. Paper based on gold is the present medium. Paper serves the purpose. Presently the gold will go—as money. It is then that its real potency will be discovered. *These three coins that I hold in my hand contain sufficient energy to blow the whole of Delhi instantly into smithereens.* Can you imagine what might happen if the wrong individuals should learn the secret of releasing that energy?"

"Inform the right ones then!" suggested Cyprian, with an intonation not quite innocent of sneer.

"Who are *they?*" asked Ghandava. "Governments? They would use the knowledge to annihilate defenseless nations. Scientists? They would incorporate, and then subdue the world into a new commercial slavery. The churches?"

He turned to Cyprian.

"You—your church, my friend, would burn the books containing the secret knowledge—that is by your own admission. And tell me: which of the other churches would you be disposed to trust?"

"Well, what do you propose to do with the gold, or the energy released from it, or the secret knowledge?" Grim demanded.

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"That, my friend, is fortunately not my province!" Ghandava answered, chuckling. "Have you money in your purse?"

Grim nodded.

"Do you know arithmetic?"

He nodded again.

"Some languages? A little natural science? A reputation possibly? Some skill in diplomacy perhaps? A little self acquaintanec, worth more than all the rest? And the sum-total of all that is your capital?"

Grim nodded.

"What do you propose to do with it?"

Grim grinned, beginning to see the point.

"Is that my business?" asked Ghandava. "It is every man's own business what he does with the knowledge that he knows! It is the business of those who keep the ancient secrets to say what they will do with them. As long as they keep the secrets——"

"I am like a flat balloon!" Chullunder Ghose broke in. "Oh grief, why art thou part of me! I who was all optimism—how my buoyancy solidifies and bears me down! I saw a pyramid of gold. Necessitous by force of *karma*,* how I thanked the gods! And now this holy *guru* takes the pyramid away and gives us energy! Oh energy! You jade! I love you not! My belly aches for money and a long rest! Ow! King sahib—please!"

"But if others steal the secret—" Jeremy suggested.

GHANDAVA hesitated. If guesswork had a chance of uncovering his thoughts, he was speculating whether it was safe to continue. He seemed most afraid on Cyprian's account. They say, with how much truth outsiders never know, that information won by any of his cloth is the property of all of his superiors on demand—and they are a goodly number.

However, Ghandava bound none of them by oath. Instead—again if guesswork's aim was true—he limited himself to explanations that would not explain, and to statements capable of more than one interpretation. That is the ancient and accepted way. All prophets and all great teachers have adopted it in self-defense.

"I, too, am on the Wheel," he said, pacing the floor between them like an old sea-captain on the poop. "I serve my little purpose in the great design, and thereafter disappear. Within my own sphere I am useful; outside it helpless. You recall? You came to me, asking advice and assistance."

"We've heard some bad advice," said Cyprian with the deliberate rudeness that old age claims to justify.

Ghandava took no notice of it. He even avoided the odious alternative of offering the other cheek self-righteously. Not even a fly, departing on the wing, could have been less recognized than Cyprian's remark.

"You have a plan, I suppose?" he suggested.

He addressed them all, but they all looked at Cyprian; for it was he who had been interrupted while laying down the lines of a plan, in his own place, previous to the holocaust of books. He seized the opportunity to resume the reins.

"I had a very good plan," he said peevishly. "I proposed just now that we let a prisoner go, but you have hidden him somewhere."

Again Bhima Ghandava refused to take offense. An old man's querulousness seemed to mean no more in his philosophy than the barking of dogs a mile away. The absolute indifference to petulance offended Cyprian more than anger might have done and his feeble old hands fidgeted more nervously than ever on the chair-arms.

Jeremy, observing more intently than the others, crossed over and sat beside him. Cyprian laid a hand on his shoulder and ceased trembling. He was always more at ease with Jeremy to lean on.

"Suppose you tell the plan," Ghandava suggested, sitting back in one of the deep armchairs.

In that attitude you could imagine him in rooms at Oxford or on a grass-bank under a big tree taking part in a village council. In fact you could imagine him doing almost anything except starting trouble.

Cyprian, seeming to draw strength from Jeremy, obliged himself to smile; but he was plainly subduing passion.

"Had I known, Ghandava, that you are connected with the Nine Unknown, I never would have come here. You *know* that," he said, shaking his head at him.

"Yes, I know it," said Ghandava. "That is why I never told you, friends though we have been. But now that you

*The law that the sins of former lives inevitably must be met in this and future ones.

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are here and know the fact, suppose we make the best of it?"

Ghandava was talking *at* the others now, *through* Cyprian. It was growing clear that Cyprian had made his mind up to withdraw. Ghandava, realizing that, was equally determined not to lose the men who, by an accident, had come within his orbit.

"The best?" said Cyprian squeakily. "You tell me you are employed by the Nine—in their *confidence*—and you ask me to tell you my plan for obtaining knowledge of them, and perhaps for capturing their books!"

Ghandava continued smiling, but if he had looked superior he would have lost the good-will of every man in the room, especially Jeremy. He was not aggressive; not on the defensive. He was more like a counsel called in to pass judgment on a problem, seeking the solution as he listened.

"You speak as if you had the *right* to the Nine's books," he answered quietly. "They would dispute that. From certain knowledge I assure you there is nothing on earth more impossible than for you to discover where the books are. You can not even prove that the books exist!"

"Have you ever seen them?" Cyprian asked him dryly, suddenly motionless, watching under lowered, wrinkled lids.

Ghandava laughed.

"I have seen *some* books. How shall I know to which of them you refer?"

"*All* of them!" snapped Cyprian.

"My friend, I will tell you something," said Ghandava. "There are hundreds of thousands of books, each one of which would come within your definition. There are libraries in crypts beneath the desert sands, that represent the knowledge of nations that disappeared before Atlantis took shape. There are books whose very alphabet *fewer* than nine men know, written in a language compared to which Sanskrit is a *modern* tongue. There are individual books among those that contain more true scientific knowledge than all the works of all the mordern chemists and metallurgists put together. If you had *all* the books you would have no building big enough to contain a *tenth* of them. And if you were twenty years old you would not have time to learn the wisdom contained in *one* book—which book, however, it is not within your power to find."

He spoke as one having authority. But he said no more than is commonly said in the East among men who look deeper than the daily press for fact, and who listen to the real news of the hemispheres that susurrates below or else above the bleatings and bull-boastings of such as sell what they call learning in the market-place. Cyprian, King and Grim, for instance, were not in the least surprized. Narayan Singh nodded. Chullunder Ghose assented less silently:

"I have prayed to the gods; I have even bestowed expensive presents on the gods, depriving unfortunate family of necessaries to that end. I have promised the gods, so often and so suppliantly that they can not help having heard—if there are any gods! I have even told the priests the gist of my intentions, same being probable secret of failure down to date. If I can find *one* such said ancient book and sell same to American Museum, U.S.A., I will found orphanage with half of proceeds, and no questions asked as to orphans' pedigree. Our Ali of Sikunderam may— Ouch! King sahib, please apply pole to proper purposes!"

"So it amounts to this," Ghandava said. "If your purpose is to rid the world of an evil, I am at your service in so far as I agree with you what evil is. If you hope to intrude on those who have commissioned me, I must merely look on. I may possibly prevent you."

"Let's make a bargain then," suggested Jeremy.

But Bhima Ghandava had no appetite for bargains. He made a grimace more suggestive of contempt than anything he had said or done since they entered his house.

"I will do what I *can* do, freely," he answered.

"We're your guests. Outline what you *will* do," Ramsden suggested.

Cyprian agreed to that. There was nothing to lose by listening to what Ghandava might intend. But the trouble was that he intended not to give away his hand.

"Father Cyprian had a plan," he said, and folded his arms, leaning back to listen.

"Go on, pop!" urged Jeremy. "Lead what you've got! Make him play higher or pass!"

Cyprian yielded, not as the men of the world yield, but with a sort of dry, implied assertion that surrender is a victory.

"We all discussed a plan—we had agreed —hadn't we?—Jeremy to visit Benares—

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disguised—Chullunder Ghose to talk for him—Jeremy to be dumb faker—do tricks—Take the coins of course—Display them—By their means attract attention of these rascals——"

"Attention of the rascals—excellent!" Ghandava commented.

"The others," Cyprian continued, "Ramsden, King, Grim, Ali of Sikunderam and all his sons—go to Benares, too—disguised as Hindus, naturally. Watch. When Jeremy attracts attention of the enemy, they watch—they watch. You understand me? Very well then. That was the plan: To watch, and then track down the enemy."

"I will help you to watch and track down the enemy," Ghandava said, as a man might who is promising to vote the party ticket.

He was firm, and enthusiastic. Every one in the room believed him, even Cyprian. But to believe is not perforce to consent.

"You understand? For my part, I have made no promises," said Cyprian.

"I have asked none," said Ghandava. "What I have to give, I give. When do you propose to start? How will you travel? Where will you stay when you reach Benares? I will do this for you," he said, unfolding his arms and sitting forward.

When he opened his mouth suddenly in that way the outlines of his jaw and chin showed distinctly through the gray beard and altered his whole appearance. He seemed to age enormously—to be as old as Cyprian—to know, from having suffered it, the whole of earth's iniquity—and yet to have retained (perhaps, though, to have gained) a knowledge and assurance beyond human means of measuring. When he moved his mouth again, enumerating what he would do, the look of old-age vanished and he was almost on apparent footing with Ramsden and Narayan Singh.

"I will do these things for you; I will arrange for your protection——"

Cyprian snorted, as if he had taken snuff.

"How?" he demanded. "How?"

But Ghandava waved aside the interruption.

"I will give you permission to say you represent the Nine Unknown. That will lend authority to Mr. Jeremy's claims to be a wizard!"

"We might *say* we represented the Nine Unknown without *any one's* permission!" Cyprian objected acidly.

"You *might*. But without permission it would be *very dangerous*," Ghandava assured him; and again there was none in the room, not even Cyprian, who doubted.

Chullunder Ghose shivered and gasped like a fish out of water, and Narayan Singh, squatting on the floor, leaned forward that his eyes might look closer into Ghandava's.

Not that Ghandava minded any of those demonstrations. He seemed oblivious to praise as well as criticism of himself.

"I will provide you with means of travelling to Benares," he went on.

"Oh for the wings of the spirit! Give us but a blessing, great Mahatma, and we shall be in Benares in a minute! Put power on us! Ouch!"

King returned the window-pole to its place at rest beside him, and Ghandava continued, ignoring the babu's rhapsody:

"I will provide quarters for you in Benares. And a man shall guide you into secret places."

"What in return for all this?" Jeff demanded.

"Nothing in return. I am proposing to help you in tracking down your enemy," Ghandava answered.

"Protection? You spoke of protection," said Cyprian. "How do you propose to do that? Black art?"

Ghandava smiled back at him.

"The enemy will use black art," he answered. "The enemy will destroy itself. At intervals it does. The hue and cry accumulates, and grows so great at last that the Nine protect themselves by letting ever such a little knowledge pass out into the hands of the enemy. They try to use it, and they die. There was Sennacherib—you have heard of him and his army of Assyrians? I could cite you fifty instances from history, and for every one such there are a thousand that men never heard of."

"Then you mean, your Nine masters preserve their precious secrets merely for their own protection?" Cyprian demanded.

Mention of Sennacherib's army and other Old Testament victims of imponderable forces roused him like a watch-dog guarding against trespassers. That was *his* field.

"No, but they protect the secrets, and the secrets them," Ghandava answered. "I will show you why. If one of you will

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open the big album on that small table by the door you will find in it more than ten thousand newspaper clippings in more than twenty languages, every one of which is a direct statement of what the nations are preparing to do in the next war. You will see mention of gases that will decimate whole cities in an hour; or submarines that will render the seas not navigable, and so starve peoples; of airplanes carrying two-ton bombs loaded with such poison as will penetrate all known substances and kill men in agony; of guns with a range exceeding a hundred miles; of newly discovered methods of vibration that will shake whole cities into ruins; and of many other things, some even worse than those.

"*The forces that the Nine Unknown can use are infinitely greater than any those war-devising idiots have dreamt of!* Shall they trust their secret to the daily press? And shall they not defend themselves and their secret against the ambitious rogues who stop at nothing to possess themselves of what, if they had it, would put the whole world at their mercy? And they have no mercy, you know," he added reminiscently, as if he had investigated and could bear true witness.

"Then you're asking us to track down the enemy so that you may pounce on him? Is that it?" asked Ramsden.

"My friend, I ask nothing!" Ghandava answered, leaning forward, laying both hands on his thighs for emphasis. "Those who have commissioned me, forever give without exacting or accepting a return."

Narayan Singh nodded gravely.

"*Sahib*," he said, "that is a true speech. That is how a man may know that he deals with the *Buddhas** and not with rogues. They give, because they *will give*, and ask nothing because none can recompense them."

Cyprian snorted.

"How the gold then?"

"DID *you* ever part with gold to them?" Ghandava answered, with the first hint of tartness he had allowed to escape him.

Then, as if regretting that lapse, he crossed the floor and laid a hand on Cyprian's on the chair-arm.

"My old friend, I will never harm you—never!" he said quietly. "You would like to rid the world of certain knowledge—or rather of the possibility of learning it, for the world is ignorant of its very nature. Well, those who have commissioned me are just as careful as you to keep that knowledge hidden. The difference is that we preserve it—you would burn it—that is all. There is no chance of its becoming known. But if you will be patient you shall glimpse what might happen if even a millionth part of the knowledge were made known to men not ready for it. You shall see a wonder, and then guess, if you will, what Cæsar—who crucified a million Spaniards simply because he had the power and the inclination—would have done with poison gas! Thereafter, consider what the world today would do with even one of the secrets kept by those whom you have heard of as The Nine Unknown!"

Cyprian's eyes were not dry, but a strong light came through the window; he pretended it was that. His lips moved silently. Then—

"I will burn all their books I can find!" he said in eighty-year falsetto.

"All you can find" Ghandava answered, smiling.

"I will not go to Benares," Cyprian announced.

He was trembling violently. He looked almost incapable of going home.

"Stay in my house. Search my library for forbidden volumes!" Ghandava urged him.

Cyprian stood up, steadying himself on Jeremy's arm, then brushing Jeremy aside.

"These shall go!" he said. "To Benares! They shall go—and shall see. And if they see books, they shall bring them—bring them back—back to me. I will burn what they bring! Ghandava says he makes no demands. These made me a promise. All the books they find are mine to do with as I please!"

He looked about him, as if expecting to be contradicted. But it was true, they had made that promise. None answered.

"Now, make whatever plans you like!" said Cyprian, sitting down.

Jeff was still pondering the same perplexity, revolving it and overturning all the possibilities to find what lay beneath, just as he would have explored a mineral prospect.

"I don't understand yet," he objected, thrusting his lower jaw forward, meaning

*The word is best known as the title of the Lord Gautama or Buddha. It means "the enlightened."

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to understand if it took all day. "You ask nothing from us? You ask us to go to Benares, don't you?"

"No," Ghandava answered. "You were going to Benares."

"What do you want us to do when we get there?" Jeff demanded.

"Nothing!" said Ghandava. "Yet your purpose was—in going there—I think—to get in touch with and to undo—will the word serve?—then to undo an organization *calling itself* the Nine Unknown. I have offered to help."

"You say that it *isn't* the Nine Unknown," Jeff objected.

"Are you less intent on that account?" Ghandava asked. "When you came this morning you were anxious for an issue with your enemy. You have felt the teeth and talons of the underlings. You asked me for help in discovering the captains. I will help."

"You propose to take advantage of us?" Jeff suggested. But his smile withdrew the sting.

"No more than you of me," Ghandava answered. "We go the same way. Let us march together. There will never be a stage of the proceedings at which you are not at liberty to withdraw."

"Accept that!" ordered Cyprian, pursing his lips up, nearly rising to his feet again, and sitting down.

They accepted, one by one, each meeting Ghandava's gaze and nodding. That was the nearest they came to a pledge at any time.

"And, now," Ghandava said, "we may as well bring in the prisoner again."

Almost before the last word left Ghandava's lips Chullunder Ghose squealed delightedly. Ghandava rang no bell. No gong announced his pleasure. Yet, exactly as he gave the wish expression the door at the end of the room opened wide and the green-lined *chela* entered, leading the prisoner as easily as a farm-hand leads a bull.

"Did you see that? *Sahibs*, did you notice——"

King prodded the babu into breathless silence. The prisoner turned with his back to the window and faced Ghandava, who observed him like a professor of entomology considering a wasp, not unkindly, almost with familiarity, wholly curious. The bronze man seemed no longer to be hypnotized.

"What shall be done with you?" Ghandava asked.

The prisoner smiled loathsomely—a brute unable to see plain motives.

"You can do nothing with me! Your law is you may not shed blood," he answered.

"If I let you go, will you let these friends of mine go in peace to Benares?"

The bronze man hesitated. Then a smile of evil cunning added to the coarseness of his lips, and he drew himself up with an effort to seem princely.

"Yes," he said in Hindi—arrogant, according favors. "That is granted."

"Go then!" said Ghandava; and the green-lined *chela* led the giant out.

"Sleep now. You all need sleep," Ghandava said, and none, not even Cyprian, objected when he showed them to cool rooms within thick walls where silence and soft mattresses held promise of delight. They all slept, saving Grim, who lay awake and thought of Ali of Sikunderam alone in the office with a prisoner.

TO BE CONCLUDED

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The Daddy of Eight Hundred

by

Charles Victor Fischer

Author of "Vely," "Fish for the Gunner," etc.

ONE hundred thousand yen was in the leather grip that Paymaster Dolby carried up the cruiser *Farallone's* quarter-deck gangway, that cold January afternoon, in the harbor of Nagasaki, Japan.

The next day was pay day, and Captain Doone had ordered him to pay in Japanese money. "Daddy" Doone was taking no chances this time on having his youngsters "squeezed and bamboozled" by Nagasaki's money-exchange sharks, as they had been on a former call.

"Pay them in yen," he had commanded. "I want to know they're getting the legitimate rate of exchange."

And so Dolby, convoyed by two armed marines, had gone to the city that afternoon carrying fifty thousand dollars, which he exchanged for one hundred thousand yen. It takes a lot of money to pay a crew of eight hundred gobs and thirty-some officers.

Stepping up on to the quarter-deck, Dolby saluted the officer of the deck, then dismissed the two marines. After which he set out forward on the gun-deck for the pay-office.

He was not surprized at finding his office deserted, for it was after working hours. His yeomen, he supposed, were scattered along the upper-deck rails, taking in the novel surroundings, or gibbering pidgin English at the little yellow men in the sampans that clustered about the ship.

Tossing aside his overcoat, he opened the grip and dumped the many neatly made-up packages of yen notes on a desk. Next he turned and opened the safe, which stood at his left, five feet outboard from the desk. Then he pulled out an empty safe-drawer. Into this he commenced packing the money.

First the ones, then the twos, next the fives, and so on, he transported from desk to safe, and stowed. When the drawer was full he closed, locked it, and pulled out another. Into this one he packed the remaining fives, all the tens, and nearly all the twenties. Then he closed, locked it, and pulled out a third drawer.

Eight packages of money remained on the desk—three of twenty—three of fifty—and two of one-hundred-yen notes.

He backed over to the desk, picked up seven of the eight packages, which was all he could get his fingers around, took the two steps over to the safe, and placed them in the drawer, pausing a moment to push them over neatly to one side. After which he once more backed over to the desk, for the last package—the package of one-hundred-yen notes.

Reaching the desk he turned—and stood there, as a man in a stupor, looking down upon the bare desk-top.

The seconds ticked off. He strove for thought. He was positive he had left a package of one-hundred-yen notes on that desk. And yet——

He jumped over to the safe, looked in the last drawer. One package of one-hundreds—he'd had two. He unlocked and pulled out the other two drawers, ran his trembling fingers through the neatly stowed packages.

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He was short ten thousand yen—five thousand dollars. While he had taken the two steps from desk to safe and back, some one had taken the three steps from the door to the desk, scooped up the package containing one hundred one-hundred-yen notes, and slipped out.

Deriding himself as a brainless jackass for not having done so before, he leaped over to the door, looked forward and aft. He saw one man, about forty feet forward of the office. It was big, fat "Frisky" Malone, a chief water-tender.

"Oh Malone!" cried Dolby, running forward. "I say, Malone!"

Frisky turned a tired, sweat-and grime-covered fat face, which he wiped with a piece of engine-room waste. He was just up from a watch below.

"Did you see any one come out of the pay-office as you passed?"

Dolby's tone was high-pitched, and there was a wild look in his eyes.

"Yes, sir," Frisky replied. "Feller came out an' went aft."

"Who?"

Frisky blinked vacantly.

"Who was it? Who was it?"

"I don't know," Frisky answered, with just a hint of that Irish that doesn't like to be hurried in his tone. "I never looked at the man. But now that you ask, I'm rememberin' that he's holdin' a handkerchief up to his mug."

Dolby danced back to the pay-office door, closed and locked it. Then he went aft on the run. In the next compartment he found "Juggy" Clark, the chief master-at-arms, or ship's chief of police.

"Yes, sir," Juggy answered. "Fellow went aft through here a couple of minutes ago. But I don't know who it was, 'cause he had his map covered with a handkerchief."

There the trail ended. In the next compartment was nobody. And here the thief might have gone any one of three different ways—up a ladder, down one, or straight on aft.

Dolby saw but one move—go to Captain Doone.

ENTERING the elaborate cabin, Dolby found the genial old skipper sprawled comfortably in a deep, leather-cushioned chair, reading the Bible.

Captain Doone was short, heavy-built. He had gray hair, blue eyes, and a pleasing ruddy face, most of which was hidden by a heavy, iron-gray beard.

He was a keen observer. One glance at the unwonted pallor of the young officer's face, and from behind his heavy beard issued two words—

"Trouble, Dolby?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well?" The captain paused and laid the Good Book aside. "Suppose you sit down and let's hear it."

Dolby reported the affair clearly and concisely.

"I realize, captain," he added, "that I blundered in not closing the door. It was carelessness." He paused a moment. "I don't know how I'm going to meet it. I have no money. Bringing my wife and baby out here, and furnishing the bungalow in Manila has cost me all I had, sir."

It was not "Daddy" Doone's way to waste time in useless words of reproof. He plunged headlong into the solution.

"Of course," he began, "we'll never recover the money if we go shouting the news yellow-journal fashion about decks. We'll have to keep it dark. It would be useless to sound quarters and search the crew, because there are too many voice-tubes and other nooks where the thief could hide it. He'd never carry it to quarters."

"Could we search the liberty parties, sir?" prompted Dolby. "That is, search them over ashore, after they land, in one of the warehouses? The crook will no doubt take the money ashore with him."

"No," answered Captain Doone. "First, I don't think it would work. Second, I couldn't think of searching eight hundred men in public to get one crook. Third, there are other ways.

"You say Malone and Clark were the only men you saw?"

Dolby nodded.

"They're both above suspicion," said the captain.

They stared at each other in silence for several minutes, the captain sitting back in his easy chair fingering his thick beard, Dolby sitting straight up on the chair's edge rigid and tense.

"Hang it, Dolby!" the captain finally blurted out. "This is a tough one! One man to pick out of eight hundred! How in the dickens? One in eight hundred!"

He paused, blinking his helplessness.

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"However," he continued, his eyes puckering, "we'll have to do something. And in this case that is—for the present at least—nothing. Go forward and act as if nothing had happened—just as if you never missed it. Pay the crew in the morning. If the shortage leaves you without enough in Japanese money, pay the officers in dollars. You can do that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Not a word. First get hold of Malone and Clark and close them up. Send them both to me."

THE crew were paid next morning. Liberty, commencing at noon, was announced.

The commissary department drew the wrath of the crew by making the noon offering liver. No gob who values the respect of his shipmates would eat liver on a pay-day. Nay, nay. They sniffed, and got into liberty blues and peacoats, three-fourths of the eight hundred of them. Fully half an hour before boat time they were crowding about the quarter-deck turret, waiting for the word.

Captain Doone came up on deck and, after a glance at the mass of peacoated and flat-hatted tars, stepped over to the rail, where he stood stroking his beard, looking down upon the myriad sampans that clung fly-wise about the big ship's stern. Presently he turned and spoke to the officer of the deck, who paced near by.

"Cole, you've got a heavy liberty party there. You'll need a whole string of boats. Let's see if we can't lighten things somewhat. Pass the word that all those who don't mind paying their own way in may hail sampans. Let them check out with the quartermaster and jump into the boats."

When Ensign Cole passed this word on to the waiting crowd there followed a stampede. Little Denny Ryan, the quartermaster, whose job it was to check them out, received the brunt of it. They checked out, stumbled down the gangway, fell into the jostling sampans, and, four, five, six in a boat, headed for the city.

Arrived there they scattered. Into the 'rickshaws that clogged the wharf, and away they went. Presto! The streets of Nagasaki were alive with endless processions of man-drawn gobs.

Gobbie enjoys nothing more than riding in a 'rickshaw. He sits there with his head held high, arms folded, legs crossed, at intervals snapping "*Siggey!*"—meaning gid-dap!—at the poor little yellow man in the shafts, the while telling himself it's a great life. All thought of such daily comrades as deck-scrubbers, holy-stones, paint-work rags, he pushes into subconscious oblivion. He feels himself swell and swell—like a sponge dipped in water.

The *Farallone* boys were not the only uniformed Americans in Nagasaki that afternoon. One of the trans-Pacific Army transports was in the harbor. She was en route from Manila to San Francisco, by way of Shanghai and Nagasaki, and carried several hundred homeward bounders—soldiers, sailors and marines.

It was one of these homeward bounders who early that afternoon began attracting attention. This old deep-water boy would draw gazes anywhere. Even the old-timers of the *Farallone* had to scratch the backs of their necks and grin as they looked at him. He was a reminiscence.

He was short and heavy-set, had broad but slightly drooping shoulders, and was as bow-legged as a jockey. On his bull-like neck was mounted the most horrible face that Fate ever condemned a man to carry. It was all down on one side, bunched and wrinkled about one end of a mouth that was hideous in its twisted, gash-like ugliness. You couldn't tell whether he was grinning or weeping. He was blear-eyed, greasy, dirty. Brown, gray-streaked hair that hadn't been trimmed or combed in months hung down over his forehead, ears, and the back of his neck.

His age would stump an age expert. He might be anywhere between fifty and seventy-five.

On his head, tilted down over one hair-covered ear at a forty-five degree rake, was a faded old flat-hat—one of those old, old "sea-going" affairs, wide enough to serve as an umbrella. His mid-ship section was wrapped in a peacoat, so tattered, threadbare, and dirt-crusted that the most sunken, down-and-out hobo would not have accepted it as a gift. And from the tail of that coat, reaching almost to his heels, hung a huge blue handkerchief. So wide at the bottoms were his patched and frazzled trousers that he seemed in constant peril of being tripped by one leg wrapping

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about the other. His shoes looked like two canal boats.

He swung along with a deep-sea roll, carrying a heavy list to port—sort of corkscrewed along, oscillating between the inboard edge of the sidewalk and the middle of the street.

And that old pest—for he was just that—gave the *Farallone* boys no peace. No matter where a group of them happened to be, that crooked-faced, red-eyed, bow-legged old sot would appear in their midst.

"Wild's my name—Oscar—Oscar Wild," he would introduce himself. "Ever hear o' 'Ducky' Wild? I'm him. Just over from Shanghai. Had orders to report aboard this transport in Manila. Got drunk an' missed 'er. Chased 'er to Shanghai, payin' m'own way—missed 'er again. Stows away on the *Toyo Maru* for here, an' reports aboard old John Transport two hours ago. Wha' d' you think o' that? Chased 'er all the way from Manila.

"Say—talk about raw deals. I'm in the outfit twenty-nine years—straight service—an' now wha' d' you think they're doin' to me?"

He'd pause, then continue sadly:

"Kickin' me out for pollutedness. Pretty raw, hey? 'Nother year an' I'd retire on three-quarters—an' now, just because I went on a bat, stayed drunk for five, six or eight weeks, they're shootin' me the boot. Wha' d' you think o' that?"

With which he would pause and thrust that repugnant face close up to that of his nearest listener.

Clean-cut, natty gobbie would back away, for that old tar was heavily onion-flavored. Gobbie would agree, however, that it *was* a raw deal to kick a man out for so trifling an offense as five, six, or eight weeks of pollutedness.

Whereupon the old tar would grow confidential and follow his victim up close.

"Say boy—lemme take a yen, two or five—whatever you can spare. 'Sawright. I don't want it for booze. Here's my proposition: I'll pay you back tomorrow mornin', two for one on your money—give you back three yen for every one you gimme now. Fair 'nuff?

"I got a big thing on. Biggest killin' y'ever heard of. She's a dead sure thing, an' pays six for one. She's all mine if I can raise the kale by midnight. Five thousan' yen by midnight, an' I clean up thirty thousan' in the clear. Git it?"

The *Farallone* gobs gave, partly out of big-heartedness, but mostly to get rid of the old pest. Not one of them expected to ever be repaid his one or two yen. No one believed the old derelict's wild-cat yarn. He was merely an old remnant, they supposed, who, after twenty-nine years of carousing service, suddenly found himself headed for the outside—flat; a piece of scrapped humanity, trying to scrape together a homeward-bound stake.

He carried a small notebook, greasy and thumb-worn, and to which a short stub of pencil was attached by a string. In this he insisted on each giver entering his name, ship, and amount. If a man refused to enter his name the old tar would not take his money.

"I'm playin' fair," he promised over and over. "Payin' everybody back tomorrow mornin', three yen for every one. 'Sawright. I look polluted, I know. But notice I ain't drinkin' nothin'. Neither I ain't drunk. Just carryin' a hang-over, that's all. Man! I'm just comin' out of five, six or eight weeks of straight pollutedness. 'S why they're kickin' me out.

"But I ain't goin' out broke. Not if I raise the kale by midnight. Five thousan' yen by midnight brings home thirty thousan' in the clear. Ten o' that goes back to you fellows tomorrow mornin', along with the five you'se lemme take. Leaves me twenty thousan' velvet.

"Tell you muh scheme? Tell you, ——! Ha, ha, ha, ha!" It was a laugh that brought shivers and goose-skin. "Didn't tell you I stowed away on the *Toyo Maru* from Shanghai to here? Some big Japs on that ship. I savvy their lingo—git me? I got on the inside o' somethin'."

In one, and two, yen notes they handed it out, and wrote their names in his notebook.

He went from place to place; he stopped every *Farallone* gob he met; he hailed them as they passed in 'rickshaws. There was no escaping him.

Each bill received he jammed into the left side-pocket of his dirty peacoat. By four o'clock that pocket was bulging prodigiously. Yet the old tar tarried not. He kept right on spinning his yarn into ear after ear, and crumpling bill after bill into that bulging pocket.

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PART of the old tar's yarn was confirmed by a few of the transport men. He had come aboard about one o'clock that afternoon, they stated, and reported to the officer in command of the homeward-bound draft. After which he had immediately gone ashore again.

"But what gets me," said "Slippery" Ditch to a group in Shimisu's café, early that evening, "is how he comes to get ashore after pullin' all that booze stuff, an' chasin' the ship all around the circuit. You'd think they'd stow him in the brig the minute he came aboard."

"Maybe they're in hopes he'll miss 'er again," replied a marine. "That would save them the paper work of kicking him out in 'Frisco."

"I was the first man he braced," said Slippery. "I was a little late gettin' ashore. Him and I had a sampan race for the dock. He just beat me to it. Then as soon as I stepped up on the dock he nailed me and started buzzin' that big killin' stuff in my ears. But he didn't make it stick. I ain't handin' out my kale to an old bum like him. If——"

"Who the —— are you!"

Slippery jumped—for the words were barked right into one of his ears. He suddenly became aware of a strong onion odor.

"Old bum, hey?"

There was red in the old tar's half-closed eyes, and his slanting, gash-like mouth was open, showing two rows of hideous, tobacco-brown teeth. "You —— rat!"

He spat a long brown stream, which would have caught Slippery on the shoes and pants-bottoms, had he not been quick on the side-step.

"I'm sailorizin' before you're outa your cradle! You —— rat!"

Slippery swallowed a few times, shifted from leg to leg, the while keeping a wary eye on the old tar. For despite his apparent age and sottishness that old salt had all the ear-marks of a man-handler.

"Old bum, hey?" With a fat dirty thumb he jabbed himself in the breast. "I never lie! If I tell these lads I'll pay 'em back three yen for every one tomorrow mornin' I'll pay—git me? An' you can lay to that. Old bum, hey? You —— rat! When I was a kid I used to throw rats off roofs. An' for two pins——"

Here the old tar was interrupted. Above the din of voices, clinking glass, and metallic piano-clatter rose the voice of big, fat Frisky Malone—

"Hello Ducky!"

The old tar pivoted. For a moment he stood reeling, grinning hideously at Frisky. They both lunged forward. With a resounding clap their right hands came together.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed a voice at the bar. "If he looks like that when he grins, I never want to see him cry!"

"I never did see such a puss in all my life," declared another.

"That's why his hair ain't combed. He's afraid to look in a mirror."

"An' he's sure been goin' strong on the onions!"

"He had me guessin' on whether he was gonna take a wallop at Frisky, or shake hands with him."

So ran the side-line comment.

Meanwhile Ducky Wild and Frisky Malone stood off to one side, talking, chuckling, digging each other in the ribs, as old shipmates will. Being Irish, the odor of onions was not offensive to Frisky. Presently they strode up to the bar, where Frisky ordered a glass of beer, and Ducky ginger-ale.

"I'm tryin' to sober up, Frisk," he apologized. "Got somethin' big on for tonight. Hear about my big killin'?"

Frisky seemed to be having trouble hearing.

"Say!" he bellowed at the bartender. "Shtop that noise-makin' machine, will you for a minute, till I hear what me old shipmate says."

And with the cessation of the piano's clatter, the hum and buzz of the many voices died down to silence. No less than fifty pairs of curious eyes were fixed on the two old-timers at the bar.

"Did I hear about your big killin'?" spoke Frisky. "How in the —— name could I hear anything when I only jist come ashore? Me an' Juggy Clark jist come over together. Remember Juggy? He's chief Jimmy-legs now. I'm only after leavin' him up in the lime-juicer's place. What's your big killin'?"

Ducky wound up another long brown squirt with—

" 'T'slike this——"

And for perhaps the thousandth time since early that afternoon he reeled off his yarn.

The gobs and marines along the bar saw

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Frisky draw forth a huge roll, strip off a one-hundred-yen note, and hand it to Ducky. Frisky refused to enter his name in the notebook.

"The'll be no signin' names between you an' me, Ducky," he laughed, slapping the other on the back. "I'm knowin' Ducky Wild too long for that."

Frisky uttered it loud enough for all hands to hear. And he followed it up by addressing all hands, in a voice loud enough to be heard a block away.

"You fellers mind what I'm tellin' you'se," he shouted. "I'm knowin' Ducky Wild a good many years. If you was all as honest as he is you wouldn't be after doubtin' the man's word when he tells you'se he's got somethin' big on an' needs a few thousand yen. If Ducky Wild says he'll pay you'se back tomorrow, then tomorrow you's'll be gettin' your money back."

"An' yuh can lay to that," Ducky supplemented.

After which Ducky found it easy sailing in that place.

He began at the head of the column and worked aft. He overlooked not one of them. Nor did anyone try for a stealthy getaway. For gobbie has a sense of sportsmanship that is colossal. To him nothing more odious than the term "piker."

More yen notes were handed out, more names went into the notebook, and Ducky's left side-pocket bulged the more.

THE last man he came to was Slippery Ditch. After glaring him up and down for a few moments, Ducky growled—

"Of course you ain't handin' out to the old bum."

"I'll help the good cause along," Slippery answered, drawing his roll.

Ducky continued to glare him up and down.

"A snipe, hey?" he grunted, noting the strip of red tape on Slippery's shoulder. (Snipe, in tar language, means fireman, or coal-heaver.) "I don't like your physog, sonny. You got shifty eyes."

The gobs near by exchanged knowing winks.

Had Ducky questioned any of them he would have learned that Slippery Ditch had an uncanny way of rolling "naturals" with the dice; that the way he filled out flushes and straights on two-card draws was nothing short of supernatural; that he was an eel for squirming out of trouble, as, for instance, in that watch-stealing affair of some time back. That was about all anyone knew about Slippery.

"It's the only face I got, old-timer." Slippery forced a grin. "But I'll help the good cause," he repeated, stripping a one-yen note from his roll and holding it out.

For a few seconds Ducky glowered down on the proffered bill. Then abruptly a whimsical light flashed in his bloodshot eyes, and out of his twisted gash of a mouth squirted a long brown stream. Slippery jerked in his hand just in time.

"You'll help!" Ducky snorted. "The —— you will! I ain't takin' nothin' from the likes o' you! I don't like your physog! I can't see you gittin' in on a sure-thing that pays back three for one. Y'ain't worth it."

Whereupon Ducky swung about and went staggering toward the front. Half-way to the door he halted, reached down behind him and grasped the big blue handkerchief that hung tail-like to his heels, brought it up to his face and into it blew a long ear-splitting blast. Then he spun about and faced Frisky Malone—

"Who's skipper o' your packet, Frisk?"

"Oh begad I meant to tell you," Frisky answered. " 'Member Doone? The little feller used to be exec. on the old *Lackawanna?* Him."

"Who, "Bible-back" Doone? The little runt that got me the ten days 'punk-and' for pollutedness that time?"

"Sure."

"Puoy!" spat Ducky. "Like to meet 'im. Just for luck I'd like to biff that bible-backed runt in the snoot. Never did like his physog."

Ducky then lifted one leg, and out of his sock extracted a huge silver watch. He shook it vigorously a few seconds, as one does a bottle of medicine, then looked at it.

"—— of a line o' boats!" he roared. "After seven oclock! Less than five hours to go, an' over two thousan' yen to collect!"

"Shorty" Scott, the radio chief spoke up:

"Let us in on the game, old boy. We're all good sports. If it looks like a good gamble, we might be able to rake up what you're shy."

"Gamble your Aunt Lizzie!" Ducky shot back, halting at the door. "No gamble

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about it! It's a sure thing—a pick-up. Pays six for one. You fellows git two; I git four. Your money, my brains. Let y'in on it? You're cock-eyed!"

And leaving behind him a string of echoing "Ha-ha's" that sent shivers surging up and down their spines, Ducky went out.

TWENTY minutes later Ducky entered the "lime-juicer's" café. For fully a minute he stood swaying at the door, his squinting eyes ranging the long row of caps and flat-hats that lined the bar. At length, obviously having decided to begin at the head of the column, he lurched over to the first man.

Instantly he encountered a cross-current. The man at the head of the bar was the most hard-boiled, foul-mouthed roughneck in the *Farallone's* entire crew of eight hundred—"Biff" Kelley.

Biff leered at him viciously.

"Sa-a-ay," he growled, "doncha think it's time you got wise to yourself? Who ever told you we're sponges? You nailed me twice this afternoon in two different places, an' I give you two yen both times. An'——"

" 'Sawright," Ducky came right in on him. "All good things are three. Ever know that? 'T'sright. You gimme four yen? Then gimme another one, an' make it even money. She'll bring you back fifteen to-morrow mornin'."

Biff's bulldog face reddened to a lobster-red. The leather-like skin bunched about his squinting eyes. He showed his teeth. His short heavy arms crooked, and his big fists doubled up.

"You think you're some foxy kind of a bird, don'cha?"

Which Biff followed up with an avalanche of foulness that must have caused Sodomites to turn over in their graves. It only caused Ducky Wild to grin more hideously. He stood there reeling heavily, his grinning eyes meeting Biff's fiery glares unblinkingly, as if to say, "Go ahead and pop it off, sonny."

And while Biff was popping, Slippery Ditch entered, walked to the rear, and took a place at the end of the bar.

Biff didn't quite get it all popped off.

"Hello Ducky!"

This time it was "Juggy" Clark, the chief master-at-arms, who recognized an old shipmate in Ducky.

The filth-sputtering mouth of Biff clamped shut. The next moment it was wide open, as if catching flies, as he watched Juggy and Ducky shake hands. Biff was a crestfallen gob. For on that ship Juggy Clark was a power—a bad man to get on the wrong side of. And here he had been calling this old tar, who was a good friend of Juggy's, everything in his lexicon.

The two old shipmates stepped to one side, clear of the crowd.

And just what had occurred at Shimisu's occurred here. The two presently walked up to the bar, Ducky buzzing his yarn into Juggy's ear. Juggy drew a fat roll of bills, stripped a one-hundred-yen note off, and handed it to Ducky, just as Frisky Malone had done. Then he stepped back and, after getting the attention of all hands, proceeded to proclaim volubly and vouch for the integrity of one Ducky Wild.

After which Ducky once more began at the head of the column. Biff Kelley, eager to redeem himself in the eyes of Juggy, started the ball rolling with a five-yen note. Others cheerfully followed suit. They had their ones, twos, and fives out and ready to hand over before Ducky reached them.

"Kale, kale, must have kale," Ducky chanted to each man. "All you can spare. Two thousan' yen needed, an' only four hours to go. Pay you back to-morrow, three for every one. Your money, my brains."

And just as in Shimisu's, the last man he came to was Slippery Ditch. For fully a minute Ducky stood looking at him as a bulldog would a rat.

"How the —— did you git here?" he finally growled. "Fly? Or did you foller me?"

Once more he made Slippery side-step with a long brown squirt. "Say, sonny," he continued. "I don't want to see your physog again—git me? Better gimme a wide berth. 'Cause when I see too much of a physog I dislike I fill right up chock-a-block with rootin', tootin', man-eatin' qualities."

Slippery held up a protesting hand.

"I'm not lookin' for trouble, old-timer." His tone was oily. "I want to talk to you."

He swept the crowd with his shifty eyes, then, noting that no one was paying the old tar any further attention, stepped over close to Ducky and spoke into his ear—

"Step in the back room with me and I'll make you a proposition."

He turned, and took a dozen steps to the

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rear to a door that opened into a back room. As he halted with his hand on the knob, he winked back at Ducky, and with his head beckoned him to follow.

As he followed Slippery into the room, Ducky thrust his right hand into his side coat-pocket. Slippery closed the door behind them. When he turned and faced Ducky, the latter drew his hand from his pocket.

"No phony moves now, sonny. I can't miss you with this—'cause it shoots buckshot."

Slippery looked into the muzzle of what might, with considerable latitude, be called a pistol. It looked like a single-barreled shotgun with barrel and stock both sawed off short.

SLIPPERY paled, as he noted that the hammer was up, and that one of Ducky's fat dirty fingers was on the trigger.

"Don't!" He put up his arms and turned his face. "For —— sake, don't point that thing at me!"

Ducky grinned, showing his loathsome brown teeth.

"Just lettin' you know there ain't gonna be no monkey-tricks," he chuckled. "'Cause I don't like your physog."

He lowered the gun.

"What's your proposition?"

With the gun no longer pointing at him, Slippery began to breathe again.

"Let's sit down over here," he prompted, and stepped over to a table, round which were four chairs. "I'll buy the drinks," he added, pushing a button on the wall.

"Sit down! With you? Drinks ——! Talk turkey!"

In response to the bell one of the Japanese bartenders shuffled in. He bolted right out again when Ducky turned that baby shotgun on him and roared—

"*Siggey!*"

Ducky then turned on Slippery, who was now seated.

"Come on, come on, talk turkey!" he commanded, shaking the gun under Slippery's nose.

Slippery was a frightened boy. No question about it, this roaring tornado was a rootin', tootin' son-of-a-man-eater! There was no telling what the sun-kissed old sot might do with that gun! He flourished it under Slippery's nose as if it were a fragrant flower he wanted him to smell of.

"Turkey, turkey, talk turkey!"

"For —'s sake," babbled Slippery. "I can't talk with you shakin' that gun under my snoot!"

Ducky poked the gun into his pocket.

"All right," he snapped. "What's your proposition? Come on, come on, git it out! 'Cause—" He lifted one leg, drew that huge silver watch from his sock, shook it, looked at it—"I ain't got much time to monkey with the likes o' you. I got a lot o' kale to collect. Gotter git two thousan' more yen by midnight."

Slippery leaned forward, a cunning light in his eyes.

"That's what I want to talk about—that kale. You can't rake up two thousand yen in four hours, when they're only handin' it out in ones and twos—can you?"

"Go ahead, go ahead!" Ducky rasped.

"You say if you have five thousand yen by midnight, you've got a sure thing——"

"That pays six for one," Ducky cut in. "Go ahead, go ahead!"

"Supposin' I put up the two thousand yen you're shy. At six for one that would bring twelve thousand. What's the best you'd do on the split?"

At this Ducky grinned a broad, crooked, derisive grin.

"You got two thousan' yen, hey? I knew I had your number, sonny. I could tell by the way you stand at the bar all by your lonesome. Costs more to travel in company, hey? You're one o' them dudes that lets everything ride with the paymaster, right? Y'only draw enough on pay-day for soap an' tobacco, what? I got you, sailor, I got you."

"You got me wrong," Slippery retorted. "I'm just as good on the spend as the rest."

"Then how the —— do you come to have two thousand yen? I'm in the outfit twenty-nine years, an' I ain't never had that much at one time. Only times I ever had a wad of any size at all was when the dice spoke right—when I cleaned up."

"That's just what I did last night in the fire-room," Slippery replied. "I cleaned up in a crap game."

Upon hearing this an abrupt change came over Ducky. His hostile attitude fell away. He eased up on the forward thrust of his jaw. The glare of contempt in his red, watery eyes gave way to a look of tolerance, and this, in a few seconds, to something akin to admiration. He shifted, fidgeted on

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his feet, the while scratching the back of his neck.

"Cleaned up, hey?" The strident rasp was gone out of his tone. "Hm-m-m." He hesitated. "Maybe I had you wrong, sonny. But you got my animal back in that other dump, when you said I was an old bum. You hadn't oughta——"

"I know, old-timer," Slippery hastened to break in. "I hadn't oughta done it. I spoke unthinkin'."

With that he paused and sat looking up at the old tar craftily.

"You got a physog just like a fox," grinned Ducky.

"I know. But how would we split that twelve thousand?"

One of Ducky's hands went up to his chin, but dropped abruptly.

"My brains," he replied. "I'd say fifty-fifty. Six an' six."

"My money," Slippery countered. "How about seven and five?"

Again that hand went up to Ducky's chin, and dropped again. His eyes were blinking industriously, and his crooked mouth was quivering.

"Got the kale on you?" he questioned. "'Cause time's short. We gotta go aboard the *Toyo Maru* to put this trick over. An' if you have to go back aboard your ship for your wad——"

"I've got it right on me," Slippery broke in.

"Lemme see it." And Ducky's blinking eyes were flashing fire as he added: "I gotta see the kale. I'll split seven an' five—but I gotta see the kale."

SLIPPERY threw back the flaps of his peacoat, and thrust one hand into the opening at the neck of his jumper—down, deep down to his waist. For several seconds he sat thus, with his arm buried to the elbow, looking up into Ducky's twitching face.

Something in that face brought Slippery to a halt. There was something queer about it. Everything about that old tar was queer.

Several times an odor, as of licorice, had come to him, seemingly from Ducky's breath. Absinthe, he had thought. But how, it now came to him, could a man carry two distinct odors—of absinthe and of onions—on his breath at the same time. The one would kill the other.

A long squirt of brown from Ducky's crooked mouth brought home the explanation.

The old salt hadn't been drinking absinthe. Nor was he chewing tobacco. It was licorice. The onion odor accounted for the wateriness in his eyes, and the red about them. These, and the dirt and grease—all smear.

And then Ducky once more made that involuntary move—brought one hand up to his chin, and dropped it.

Slippery's resourceful brain leaped to action. Just what was what he did not know—but in those few seconds it flashed to him that this old tar was playing him. And with the cunning of a fox he met the issue.

He continued to grope inside his jumper. Suddenly he sat up straight, seemingly frozen so, his mouth wide open, his eyes staring straight ahead, as if wavering between doubt and surprize. Then he began clawing about inside his jumper. His eyes blazed, and his teeth clicked together viciously, as he straightened up to his feet.

"Man!" he snarled. "I've been picked! Cleaned out!"

Ducky's chin went forward. Wrath glinted in his eyes. His right hand shot to his side coat-pocket.

"You're a liar!" he roared hoarsely. "You never had two thousan' yen! You was just tryin' to git me to wise y'up on my scheme!"

And as he backed away, Ducky drew that baby shot-gun.

"Think you're a fox, don't you. I gotta good mind to blow your tricky head off! You —— rat! Made me lose a good fifteen minutes! An' me workin' against time! You —— rat!"

Slippery darted a furtive glance at the door.

"Best thing you can do," commented Ducky. "Lope. Git before I drill that physog o' yours full o' buckshot holes. Git out that door an' keep right on gittin' till you git to the sidewalk. An' don't forgit I'm rompin' right in your wake, hankerin' like —— to pull the trigger. Git!"

THEY marched out into the crowded barroom, Ducky pointing the gun at Slippery's back. Halfway to the front door they proceeded, until Slippery was abreast of where Juggy Clark stood at the bar.

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"All right, Clark!"

Clear and sharp those three words broke on the ears of the crowd. In the wink of an eye there was silence. For, although but one man in the place knew Ducky Wild, every *Farallone* flat-foot and leatherneck present knew that voice.

Despite his two hundred pounds, Juggy Clark moved with the agility of a cat. He pivoted, leaped up behind Slippery, and, grasping a handful of his peacoat collar, gave a powerful downward pull, thus pinning his arms behind him.

With a yelp of surprize, Slippery began to struggle. He squirmed, dropped to the floor, tried to roll over. Failing thus to tear loose he tried to pull his arms out of his coat-sleeves. But two metallic clicks, and with them the feel of cold steel on his wrists, put an end to his efforts. Juggy sprang to his feet and stepped clear, leaving the ironed lad kicking and rolling over the floor.

Slippery bit and kicked as they dragged him across the room and deposited him in a chair. Then while Juggy held him, Ducky searched him.

He plunged his hand into the neck of the captive's jumper, felt down around his body, then farther down, down to his waist. He grunted as his hand closed on a thick package of paper, and said "Aha!" as he drew it forth.

The gobs crowding about stared wide-eyed at a huge package of one-hundred-yen notes.

"Unless he's spent some of this," said the old tar, "it contains ten thousand yen. He stole it from the pay-office yesterday afternoon."

They stared hard at him.

Ducky's face was no longer crooked. It was a strong finely-featured face. Grease and dirt-smeared and red about the eyes, yet the clean-cut profile was there. The droop in his shoulders was gone, also the pugnacious forward thrust of his head. And he stood on two short, but straight, stocky legs.

He turned and spoke to the wild-eyed lad in the chair.

"We got you, my lad, on your past performances. Some time ago we had you up on the charge of stealing a watch. Although we felt that you were guilty that time, we didn't have quite enough proof to nail you down. At any rate that's how I came to single you out this afternoon. You were the only man in our family of eight hundred whom I could reasonably suspect."

Saying which the old tar removed his brown wig, uncovering a head of iron-gray hair.

Excited whisperings went up.

"Sufferin' whales!"

"It's the Old Man with all his whiskers off!"

"An' his face all smeared up!"

"But how in the blazes did he twist his mug like that?"

Juggy helped Slippery to his feet and started with him for the door.

"You ain't got a —— thing on me," snarled Slippery. "You can't prove anything. Money is money——"

The door closed on him.

Daddy Doone stood riffling the package of bills.

"But the point is we've got everything on him," he said smiling. "These bills are a brand new issue. Dolby was fortunate enough to get their numbers. Nothing on him, eh?" He grinned broadly. "Proof! It'll be up to him to do all the proving. He'll have to prove where he got this."

He stepped over to the door.

"Lads," he said, "I appreciate all the assistance you gave me. I have all your names, and the amounts you contributed in my notebook. I'll return all your money in the morning."

And he went out.

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Drums of Doom

by Douglas M. Dold

A SMALL safari wormed its way along the lumpy ribbon of a forest path like a great centipede. At its head slouched Quentin Kirk, professional ivory hunter. Mechanically his feet ate the miles. He glanced at his wrist-watch. Would he be in time? Terror, impotent anger and wild panic gripped his heart, yet his pace never faltered. His tawny-bronze, saturnine face stared. Neither the terror nor the anger were for himself. His anger was for the Reverend Jonathan Eddy, because this missionary had left the mission unguarded in spite of warning; being located as it was in the least known and wildest portion of northwestern Rhodesia, not far from the Chambezi River, where Arab raids were then common occurrences. He thought this criminal negligence!

The terror was for Elida Eddy. He loved her, and he had learned two days before from his Batwa friends that the mission had been burned, the mission boys massacred and the white and black women captured; were even now being taking as prisoners toward Uja, a cess-pool of filth and iniquity. Kirk knew too well what their fate would be. The raiders were led by Arabs, and Mrs. Eddy and Elida were their prisoners.

How he should rescue them from their Ruga-Ruga captors Kirk did not then know. This much he was aware of: The retreating raiders must cross the Luibi River bordering the Congo. Because of the rains it could not be forded, and rafts would be dangerous. Therefore, the enemy must have canoes. Soon from his pigmy friends he would learn the course of the enemy. Events must then govern his plans.

He speculated grimly as to Eddy's whereabouts. Had the preacher learned of the raid on the mission? Would he still talk of brotherly love when he had learned of these Islam hell-bringers? Under their level black brows his startlingly blue eyes stared black and baleful. His chin jutted forward full of purpose and pugnacity. With an effort of will he banked the coals of his anger, smothered the terror for the woman he loved. For Kirk, professional elephant-hunter and poacher in Congo territory, was efficient as he was brave. So he slogged along, doling out vital energy drop by drop, for he would need all his strength soon.

The man-dwarfing trees towered above them; it was a place of silent, brooding mystery. High overhead the thick foliage caverned their path; it was neither light nor dark but a green, thick nightmare gloom through which occasional sunbeams fell like starlight into a well. Silent birds flitted before them through the heavy air, drenched with the odor of decay. From all sides came the steady *drip-drip-drip* of water.

The porters, who were Cavarondos from the veld, feared the forest; they stopped tapping their tarpaulin-covered packs and *potio* sacks with their safari sticks. They listened and sweated tip-toeing. Great lliana loops hung motionless, orchids clung to mottled trunks and wide-flung buttress roots, flashy, fleshy coraline fungi clung to creepers and trees. Little green monkeys fled silently above them. From an invisible point ahead a colobus barked.

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Time passed. The shadows became swollen and grew. Occasionally came the swirling gurgle of water. Then two things happened.

The silence was torn into shreds by a pandemonium of splashings and shouting. Kirk froze into alert, hair-trigger attention. He almost fancied he had heard an English voice calling for help!

Koru, Kirk's giant Sudanese gun-bearer, rolled his eyes and shook his mop of fuzzy, black wool. He did not like this place. First there was too much silence, then too much noise. It was not good. Yet, afraid as he was, he held the big double-barreled cordite rifle in a position so that Kirk might reach back for it if he so desired. He looked, as he waited on his master's orders, like a Hercules carved out of night. His body glistened with palm oil and sweat.

In the midst of the clamor from behind a fever tree there stepped the naked four-foot form of Kirk's Batwa friend, Itiki, the pigmy, his protruding upper lip quivering, as the broad mouth gaped to smile.

He spoke a few Swahili words interlarded with sundry clicks and grunts. To the pigmy it was all a joke, yet his words galvanized Kirk's immobility. He spoke to his men—

"Follow!"

Then to Itiki:

"Lead to the river where the man kicks in the water. Be quick, for the time is short!"

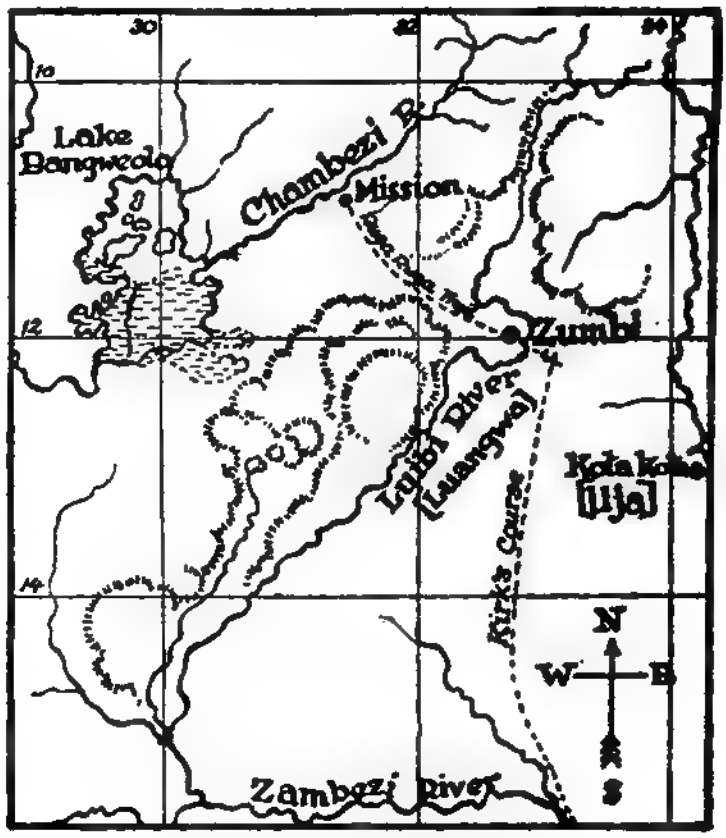
Where Kirk emerged from the forest, the river was a hundred yards in width. The opposite bank was formed by a blank, black wall of trees stiff with shadows. Silently the swollen river slid along gray, jade-green. Over it danced the heat haze, distorting the débris that floated on its surface.

"Go get me a canoe, the *bwana's* hat, the loads. Let another bring rope to me here." Kirk spoke in fluent Swahili.

His men sprang to obey his orders. From the tail of his eye he saw them running gesticulating down the bank to where the pith helmet and capsized canoe floated near the east bank.

"To the sand-spit," he shouted. "Get all paddles and loads."

The river Luibi swarmed with crocodiles notorious even in Africa as man-eaters. Kirk ran to a spot a short distance up the river; here a sand-spit dived like a tongue of copper into the opaque flood. Beyond, the current tore at a slowly swaying tree. It was evidently stranded, and as it rolled yawing back and forth, a big fat white man crawled like an acrobatic beetle back and



SECTION OF NORTHWESTERN RHODESIA

forth across the limbs. Now and then he would jump, jerking his legs with astounding agility. At every leap a portion of a great crocodile's body would emerge, reach and snap at the up-drawn legs.

At each fresh attack a group of native *shenzi*—savages—on the opposite bank shrieked and chattered. The white man made no sound. If he saw Kirk he gave no sign. All about him the pendant creamy blossoms of the uprooted baobab-tree fell into the water.

Behind Kirk, clicking, grinning, enjoying the scene, stood Itiki and three Batwas looking like little red-brown fiends. Fifty feet separated the tree from the sand-spit.

Kirk lifted his high-powered repeating rifle and fired at the crocodiles. A crocodile's armor is no hindrance to the steel-nosed bullet.

Kirk raised the Remington, his arms steady. Aiming at the crocodile, he slowly squeezed the trigger. Followed the sharp spiteful crack of the high-powered rifle. His face showed no emotion. He was aware that he had broken the saurian's neck. Again and again he fired at the nearly invisible targets.

On the tree the fat man moaned and

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gasped as he crawled back and forth above the flood. His bald head was pink, his fat lumpy body was quivering with emotion and fatigue. Kirk disliked the man. To Kirk, whose humor was sardonic, the scene stood out a grim, comic tragedy; yet he did not laugh, for the man who crawled quaking and panting, the man who now stared with appeal in his round small eyes, was none other than the Reverend Jonathan Eddy, Elida's father.

Kirk gave rapid orders to the porters who remained with him. His tone stung them into immediate action. Slipping a fresh clip into the rifle he spoke this time to Eddy, whose face glistened with river water and sweat, whose mouth gaped above its long white beard. Kirk thought he looked like a senile billy goat. Close to Kirk's shoulder his gun-bearer, Koru, held the coil of rope.

"When I throw the rope catch it. Be sure!" Kirk spoke in English.

Eddy shook his head in feeble assent, but glanced fearfully down into the river.

"Then tie the rope to the limb. I'll take care of the crocs."

Koru took his master's gun and Kirk hurled the coil of rope accurately, precisely. Eddy tied it after having nearly missed the weighted end, which had fallen fairly over his shoulder.

"The clumsy, inefficient old pot-belly," thought Kirk angrily. "Can't even save himself!"

Once more gripping a steadily held rifle, Kirk spoke to the porters. They gripped the rope and pulled.

"Hang on," snapped Kirk. "You can at least do that!"

Slowly the tree moved, swung shoreward. As it careened past the point of sand Kirk called—

"Jump!"

Eddy hesitated and then splashed into the water. For a moment it looked as if he would be swept away. The four pigmies grinned. This would be a joke! Kirk, holding the rope, dashed into the water, reached for and grasped the fat, flailing arms and dragged the missionary to the safety of shore.

Kirk was too busy to pay any attention to the fat, huddled figure which lay gaping and shuddering on the coppery sand. He was far too busy retrieving the rope. Already his keen mind vaguely groped at the shadow of a plan. Koru handed Mr. Eddy his pith helmet. Among themselves the pigmies clicked and jabbered. Kirk to them was a god; his name was, "He who is king of the elephants and slays with thunder-lightning." Eddy's native name signified, "The goat without horns, who bleats!"

Kirk glowered down at the rotund missionary, who was now recovered enough to utter sonorous platitudes of thankfulness. Kirk felt little sympathy for missions and missionaries of this type. His job was killing elephants. He found it hard to understand how this pompous, fuzzy little ass was a relation of Elida Eddy's. He thought bitterly that such a man did much to injure the white man's prestige. Why were there not more missionaries like Livingston?

ACROSS the river back in the bush the drums had begun to speak. Deep, continuous notes that gripped at the listeners' pulses.

"What is their message?" asked Kirk in Swahili.

The Sudanese giant screwed his face in concentration; his small yellow eyes rolled. He questioned the Batwa, then answered in a deep, rumbling bass, ignoring Eddy, who still fulminated sonorous thanks aimed at the Lord and Kirk indescriminately.

The porters had gathered; two more pigmies had arrived in a small canoe. With utter trust the blacks gazed at Kirk while Koru spoke, his voice rising above the continuous rumbling clamor of the drums.

"They say there be two Arabs from Ujiji. Many Ruga-Ruga with guns are of their company. They sack and burn the towns. They search for canoes and, finding none, are angry. Fly, fly lest you be taken say the drums. They are two hours from Zoombi by the Luibi; here they will abide tonight. Flee, for they that march fear none, not even the great ones of the mission. For these they have slain. The *bandas* (houses), the *shambas* (fields) are in waste. Yes, yes, they have slain even 'The goat who bleats without horns.' "

Boomaroom-boom-boom-boom-boom the drums thundered out their message of calamity and their warnings. Koru's ugly face frowned still more as he interrupted his own recitation with—

"But this can not be, *bwana*, for he is here and not dead!"

The missionary still kneeled, but he had

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turned his face to listen. What he heard had frozen it into an open-mouthed, staring, terrific sorrow. He began to mumble in an inarticulate way.

"Keep still!" snapped Kirk. "I warned you ten days ago. If I am to do anything I must hear what the drums say. Proceed. *Bassa!*" (I have spoken.)

From the jungle a hornbill moaned. The oppressive heat of the day was growing more endurable. To them drifted the fragrance of hibiscus and acacia.

Koru listened intently for a moment, then continued:

"With them are the two *bibis* (white women); also the big *garu* (big girls of the mission). Tonight they lie in Zoombi. There they sing, they dance, they feast. The God of the white is not so strong——"

"That will do," Kirk cut in. "May pull through yet," he added to Eddy, who moaned and lamented in what Kirk considered a most unfitting manner.

Kirk turned to the little group of Batwa.

"Are the canoes well hidden?"

"They are well hidden, O 'He who is king of the elephants and slays with the thunder-lightning.' "

"Have you arrows in plenty?"

"Yes, we have many arrows."

The little man showed small bark quivers filled with puny unfeathered arrows. The tips of flimsy darts were, however, carefully protected with plantain leaves. For they were poisoned with strophanthus root.

For a few minutes Kirk talked to the pigmies. Slowly, carefully he repeated to them many times their part of the plan which had been born while Koru had spoken.

When the little men understood, all smiled ferociously. Kirk found concentration difficult. Hate for the Arabs ate at his heart, anxiety gnawed him.

"Have you any weapons, Eddy?" he asked coldly, yet his startlingly blue eyes were almost gentle.

"I have no weapons, it—it was against my principles—but, by my Maker, sir—if you will furnish me with a gun I shall strike——"

"All right, Eddy; it's a ruddy mess, but we may surprize the Arab scum yet," Kirk interrupted him.

Then Kirk spoke to his men and wrote an explanatory letter which he entrusted to Koru with instructions that it was to be sent to the British Commander at Entibe in case of his failure or death.

"You boys wait here till moonset, then fire the bush back of Zoombi. Shoot much, make much noise as if many attack, but do not linger after having fired; run to the river, and there, by the two palms I will show you, wait for me. I shall come one, perhaps two hours after dark. Now repeat!"

Koru carefully repeated the orders, nodding his head in perfect understanding. The porters and headman followed his example.

"Is it understood?"

All nodded their heads, and Kirk added, as an after-thought—

"Much meat, much bakshish if all is done well."

THE drums boomed from a greater distance, yet they throbbed in rhythm with Kirk's pulses. He stood surveying the sun, which was low, its lurid rays lighting his keen, brave face. He smiled and spoke to Eddy:

"I'm banking that the Arabs will take Mrs. Eddy and Lida to the headman's hut for the night. It is under the council tree. They are going to have a big *ga'nza*—sort of feast—this will make their guards careless. I am going to climb up into the tree with a rope and let myself down on the hut and cut a hole in the roof and kill the sentry if necessary. Itiki and the other pigmies will be with me, and we will get the women up in the tree. Unless some better plan presents itself I shall do this. I told Koru to fire the bush later and shoot the guns. The wind is blowing away from the river so, there is no danger there. While the Ruga-Ruga are engaged in seeing who is attacking them and firing the bush, we'll hop it to the three palms, where Koru will come when he is through with the other job."

"Why don't you let me fire the bush or tend to the canoe?" asked the missionary.

"Would if I could, but there's only one canoe. You'll be in it, unless you count the makeshift affair that is going to take me and the pigmies over. All the other canoes are hidden five miles down the river."

Both realized that the risk was desperate, a chance in a hundred, but it was for the women they loved. Like a cone of flame the sun fell into a purple cloud edged by living gold.

Night had come.

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FOR a time the safari hived with activity. In their *boma* far from the river-bank Cavarondo and Warubas chanted in low sing-song voices as they ground their leaf-shaped spears which reflected like fingers of slim fire that pricked at the dark.

Eddy sat in Kirk's tent, a heap of huddled obesity, his teeth chattering, not with fear but with fever. Kirk made his last preparations, gave his final orders. Dumbly Eddy stared as Kirk blackened his face and hands, watched him don the light mosquito boots, wind his waist with yards of rope.

Far away the drums beat. Near by tree-hyraxes had begun screaming. Hideous, shudderful notes that made one's teeth grit.

They waited—Kirk puffing his pipe. He knew that in Africa time is nothing, for eternity is close at hand. A finger nail scratched at the tent-flap. Eddy started.

"There is little time, *bwana*," said Itiki the pigmy.

Kirk got up and shook Eddy's hand. The look on Kirk's face brought comfort to the missionary's agony of soul, for on it was written indomitable determination.

THE clumsy dugout was safely paddled across the swollen river. With Kirk were three pigmies. The African night swallowed them in breathless, living dark. On the river the starlight splashed in jagged little pools of gold. The sky was soft, feathery black.

"Are all from Zoombi?" breathed Kirk into Itiki's ear.

"Not a dog remains, *bwana;* all have fled to the bush, but the others are near and there is little time. Ah," whispered the little Batwa as the canoe grounded among a clump of papyrus. "Nothing but a snake, *bwana*."

Mosquitoes bit fiercely. From the swamps below a chorus of frogs boomed in almost perfect rhythm like lesser drums.

Kirk heard from the jungle the faraway shouts of men. He knew the Ruga-Ruga would hurry, for they, like all Africans, dreaded the dark—with good reason too. They stole past several huts, smelled rather than seen, emerging into a clearing beyond the river-bank where the ground was hard.

This was Zoombi, a place that stank. Ahead, vast and blacker than the dark itself, was the council tree. Under it was the headman's hut. Would the Arabs and their white prisoners lodge here? Kirk hoped so. More silent than the shadows the pigmies hastened to the foot of the tree, a species of fig with its immense horizontal branches, its leaves so thick as to form a veritable roof.

By the aid of a rope—which he had brought for the purpose—Kirk climbed, native fashion, to the first branch, and when he reached his objective—a limb directly over the headman's hut, he flattened himself like a great lizard. That the pigmies were about him he was aware, but his senses told him nothing. Kirk knew he was invisible from below, and when the moon rose he would be able to see.

Fireflies pulsed their wan, green-gold radiance about him; ants tortured him till an application of kerosene—which he carried for the purpose—discouraged further attacks; mosquitoes buzzed and bit; the marauders were close; now and then he caught sight of torches.

Suddenly the moon arose, an immense white sphere, and from it flowed a sea of shivering silver. In the open the shadows of palm fronds fell like inky lace on the floor of quivering mercury. Out in the bush, life became vocal, more insistent. The distant drums pulsed louder in sudden gusts of frenzy. Passion awoke. Into this realm of moonlit magic burst the marauders, shouting, gesticulating without order. From his hiding-place Kirk watched with grave misgivings in his heart. Would the white women be quartered in the headman's hut?

Fires were built, all was noise, obscene oaths in Arabic, in half a dozen native dialects. The odor of unwashed men, of cooking meat, of pungent wood-smoke curled among the fig-tree leaves.

For the most part the Ruga-Ruga were armed with flintlocks, but some carried stabbing-spears and a few Mauser rifles.

There were tom-toms, drums, and all were burdened with loot. The native prisoners were brutally herded into a close-packed group about a clump of raffia palms and were tethered by neck yokes. Moans and occasional wailing shrieks broke from them, yet their faces expressed only apathetic hopelessness, stoical despair.

Where were Elida and her mother? Where were the two Arabs? Kirk's heart tightened, a terrible doubt assailed him. Once a bestial face seemed to stare directly

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at him, and he gripped the butt of his .45, but the fellow stumbled away, kicking the very breath out of a wounded, crawling woman. Now and then the marauders turned their faces to the moon; the sorcery of moonlight gripped them. Excitement, lust, passion grew. They had cast off their motley garments and many had begun to dance. All drank Hamburg gin and native millet beer; men roared out their deeds of valor and beat their chests.

The scene had grown into a riotous, frenzied orgy. There was something evilly hypnotic about it. Faster and faster beat the drums. Some of the men leaped back and forth shouting as they hopped "*ga'nza booma*"—all pleasures of the body expressed by dance and drums—over and over in endless repetition. One man fired his flintlock, and its load of potleg tore the branches near Kirk. Then silence fell.

Two dignified tall forms in white stalked the clearing, like eagles among vultures. Each carried a modern repeating-rifle. "Mausers" thought Kirk; and each was armed with a long sword-like *panga*. One spoke in loud, gong-like voice, and his followers rushed about swaying to obey his bidding. Kirk saw his eyes were hungry and cruel as a leopard's.

By the fire the dancing men had been joined by women naked save for the cowry ornaments. He saw with a smile of bitter understanding that they were the mission girls, the big *garu*.

At first they danced stiffly, gesturing, swaying in and out. Now and then their cries rose above those of the men, fierce and high. Their eyes sparkled and rolled. The men who danced now sprang through the fire; their mouths gaped, they panted and streamed with sweat, yet they danced on. Louder and fiercely insistent pulsed the drums.

In Kirk's eyes the coals of wrath had burst into vivid sapphire flames.

Boomaroom-boomaroom, rolled the drums.

In the dark beyond the moonlight, atrocious deeds were done. There was no restraint or order.

The younger of the two Arabs stepped into the chief's hut directly below Kirk. Kirk saw that his face was pitted by smallpox and that he stared with a depraved, hungry look beyond. His arteries swelled when he saw at whom that look had been directed. Elida and her mother had entered the open ground with a guard of two huge Ruga-Rugas by them. Each woman rode a donkey. Mrs. Eddy slumped, a sallow-faced little woman who seemed dazed by the scene before her eyes. Slow tears ran down her hollow cheeks.

Elida sat straight, something of the sapling's grace in her, with its ease of movement in the round, slim figure. With scorn she looked over the moonlit inferno of the gyrating, gesticulating mob. She did not appear to hear the pulsing, crashing call of the drums, nor see the lust that peered from the eyes of her Arab captors. Terror for the girl gripped Kirk, cold, clammy sweat glistened on his blackened face. He worshiped her spirit. Below, the Arab's gaze devoured her body. Bowing with dignified solemnity, the two white clad figures beckoned toward the headman's hut. Kirk sighed with a great relief; so far his plan had not miscarried.

The moon rose higher.

The women entered the *banda*. Feeble light flickered out through its wattled walls. Kirk peered. There must be a guard. But now pools of inky shadows lay under the trees, broken here and there by patterns of slowly weaving liquid light. Kirk's face set. He must wait; their safety depended on him. Should his presence be discovered the Ruga-Ruga would tear him limb from limb. Sobbing wails rose to him from time to time through the frenzied chants. It was Mrs. Eddy, and he heard Lida's cool, brave voice comforting her mother.

The two Arabs stood by the shadow's edge. Apparently they had quarreled, for angry gutturals reached his ears. Narrowly he watched. In the headman's hut the light went out. He would have given much to be able to let Lida know of his presence. In a lull he heard her voice.

"If Quentin Kirk got my note—"

"What could he do? I suppose they have murdered your poor father. I wish I were dead."

"He could rescue us, and he will if he got my note."

The drums roared in crescendo. Smoke-swirled, evil-blackened faces gibbered through their foam-flecked lips in such a scene of bestial depravity which even Kirk had never before witnessed. The native prisoners had joined in the dance about the leaping flames, and over it, back of it, permeating all was the herd passion.

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KIRK caught sight of one of the Arabs approaching the *banda* which contained Lida and her mother. He uncoiled the rope from about his waist and crept farther along the limb. With pulses pounding he waited. On crept the tall figure, distinct in the gloom because of its white garments. He avoided patches of moonlight and kept the hut between himself and the edge of the fire where he had left his Arab companion.

From his point of vantage Kirk could see over the hut; he was aware that the second Arab had seen and stalked the first silently. By inches the pursuer moved, flowing like a gray figure of smoke through the shadow. In one hand Kirk saw that he held a twinkling long, lean-bladed dagger.

Now he leaned with legs wound about an upright branch, in his left hand the coil of rope and in his right the noosed end.

The first Arab was busy at the wall of the hut, evidently prying apart or cutting the wythes of which it was composed. He was doing this to make his entrance secret, for the door faced the fire, where he believed his brother Arab to be. Closer and closer drew the second figure. It was terrible to have to watch this treachery, this murder, silently.

Somewhere near him in the tree Kirk felt rather than saw that the pigmies also watched. Then for a second he saw Itiki's grinning face appear in the moonlight and vanish into the shadow of the higher foliage. About the fire and in the clearing the clamor was demoniacal. The moon was low now. From beyond he heard a grunt of pain. Had it come from the sentry at the hut door? Had one of Itiki's poisoned arrows found him?

The Arab who worked at the hut wall ceased for a moment, but began again, his shoulders heaving. Kirk knew that it was Lida this man sought. Now the second figure was close. It leaned. The dagger rose. It fell. The striker grunted as the victim collapsed, uttering a curdling moan, which died in a thick, wet blubbering.

Again and again the crouching figure struck savagely. The dagger thudding. Kirk leaned far out and slowly lowered the open noose. If he only could.

Her life depended on it.

The murderer rose, his head thrust forward as if to listen, and wiped the dagger on the slain man's robe. In the hut there was no sound. Just above his head dangled the open noose. Kirk leaned, braced and tense.

The rays of the setting moon now slanted under the tree. He could see the murderer's simitar nose; the gloating smile; the thrust of chin. Dexterously Kirk lowered the noose; it spun slowly around; he twitched it back, allowed it to settle; then, with all the power in his tough, strong arms, he jerked. He felt the writhing weight, heard the dull snap and knew that he had broken the Arab's neck by that first jerk.

Gasping with relief, sweating with the exertion, he pulled the dead man up beside him. Hurriedly he undressed the body, donning turban and burnoose himself. In hideous orgy the dance wore on. The moon set. It grew dark.

Descending, Kirk crouched beside the hut. A ruddy glare lighted the western sky above the wall of bush. In the distance he heard over the drums' tumult, the splutter and crackle of flames.

Koru had done his work.

BUT Kirk was worried. He must hurry, for the wind had shifted, instead of away from Zoombi it blew directly from the bush. It might mean failure yet. For instead of the diversion he had hoped to create, it would drive the Ruga-Ruga in panic—lest they be burned—to the river-bank!

Three pigmies now joined Kirk. At the hut-door lay the guard, dead from the poisoned arrows.

"Lida, Lida," called Kirk softly.

"Oh, thank God! I knew you would come."

Her voice trembled and broke, and he heard her sobbing. Quickly Kirk cut a hole through the wattled wall. Now the distant boom of guns woke the frenzied dancers by the fire. They noted the glare in the west and ran toward it.

"Now, now!" breathed Kirk. "Follow me!"

Lida's face was very white, but her wide, dark eyes were brave and from their depths the love in her soul spoke to him.

Out into the open they sped. Kirk was armed with *panga* and revolver. The pigmies would be no good in hand-to-hand fighting. It was nearly a quarter of a mile to the twin palms where the canoe would come. Kirk was aware that a few of the

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Ruga-Ruga had run toward the river. Mrs. Eddy moaned and sobbed. Her daughter almost carried her.

The drums had ceased.

All about from the west and south came to them intermittent reports of guns, trade-guns—for the most part. Slugs and potleg cut the leaves over them. Spurting flames stabbed and tore at the dark. Men and women ran shouting helter-skelter, panic-stricken by the fast approaching flames. Three men stark naked and armed with stabbing-spears rounded the corner of a hut near the river. One threw his spear. It sighed swiftly past Kirk's head. Itiki, running to cover, aimed his fragile bow and quickly shot three times; the enemy fell. If he could avoid it Kirk did not wish to fire, as he had little ammunition and then too, it might show their position, for the revolver shots would sound sharper than the discharge of the trade-guns. Only in silence and stealth would there be a chance of safety.

By the two palms which was the agreed meeting-place, he saw a group of marauders; all appeared frightened by the on-rushing flames, by their very lack of knowledge as to who attached them; all shrieked and shouted at one another. Among them dashed Kirk. Now he was forced to shoot, and report after report echoed over the river. He went hot all over and charged the remainder. As they backed slowly he forced them into the river before they were aware of it. The current swept them shrieking away.

"Hurry!" he called.

They reached the rendezvous. His heart sank. There was no canoe! Near them the pigmies had taken cover, but a crowd of Ruga-Ruga ran toward them, firing, figures of ink against the flaming background.

The volley of poisoned arrows appeared to have little effect. Kirk found himself shooting and hacking at a ring of bestial naked blacks who crept in fear-crazed fury at him. It looked hopeless. Back of him and to one side stood Lida. In her hand was a dagger one of the Arabs had dropped by the hut. Her eyes shone. Closer and closer crept the ring of blacks, shooting wildly. Soon it would be over.

Kirk was unaware that he was wounded. Like a grim machine he parried, hacked and shot; doggedly, without fear, without hope, he fought on. None of the massed brutes would be able to reach the women till he was down. He struck savagely at the black bodies that crept in on him, their stabbing-spears vicious, as the flames, much closer now for the wind had risen, lit and flickered on their blades.

His burnoose was torn off, his turban hacked and ragged. A scalp wound oozed a glistening stream. A portion of the black paint had been rubbed off. His mouth was parted; his blue eyes blazed, indomitable and fierce. Unknown to him the pigmies from the two palms rained down poisoned death.

Back of the actual attackers the mob of drink-crazed Ruga-Ruga howled, jumping in their fury and frenzied fear. They pushed and prodded the front rank on.

Kirk's *panga* broke. He stooped and picked up a musket which lay beside a dead savage, barely avoiding a whizzing spear that flickered past, burying itself with a thud in one of the palm-boles. He swung the heavy flintlock by the barrel. Under its weight he felt bones snap and crunch.

Behind him he was conscious that Lida screamed. The words reached him as if from a distance through the pandemonium.

"It's the canoe—the canoe—hurry! Hurry!"

Fresh hope came into Kirk's heart. For him there was no chance, but for the women—yes! His musket stock crashed on a round, shaved head. Something like a flame seared into his arm, he staggered, recovered and, swinging the gun flail-like, felt it reap a human harvest. Dimly he heard the splash of paddles behind. By the point, the water was deep he recalled. This was good.

Now he heard Koru's low, deep bass.

"We come, *bwana*, we come."

From the rear boomed an ear-splitting volley. He saw the attacking horde recoil as if at a blow. He saw an arm vanish and its owner turn and run shrilly shrieking.

Still Kirk rained bone-breaking blows on close-huddled attackers; again the guns boomed behind. The stink of cordite was in the air. A crashing blow descended on one shoulder; he went down.

From behind ran a man, who swung a heavy, eight-foot paddle. It was Eddy! How terrible to see the one-time pacifist slaying like a blood-mad tiger. He fought without fear, inspiring, awful in his utter fearlessness. He was like a mad bull, like a man run amuck, a tireless killing-machine.

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The heat from the advancing fire was now almost unbearable.

Under his cover Kirk slowly got to his feet. Beyond, two huts were flaming. Their ruddy light lit the missionary's face. For a moment the Ruga-Ruga broke.

"Back, back!" croaked Kirk hoarsely. Slowly they retreated while the Ruga-Ruga wavered. Carefully Kirk crawled into the clumsy canoe. Koru handed him his big rifle. Mr. Eddy had to be hauled aboard by force. Savagely, with redoubled fury the black horde rushed them, shrieks of anger rising.

Desperately the porters pushed and splashed with their paddles. Would the canoe never leave this menace? Kirk discharged both barrels of the elephant gun at pointblank range into the very faces of the leaping mob. Even this did not stop them, for the fire drove them on, having ignited the dry papyrus about them.

At last the canoe was free in deep water. It teetered and rolled. Four Ruga-Ruga splashed in after them. Eddy rose and delivered smashing blows on the pursuers' heads. One after another they sank.

Now they were free. Only spears splashed into the current about them; only the shrieks of baffled rage reached those in the canoe, mingled with the scattered reports of muskets.

It was over. They had won.

Kirk went dizzy and limp, yet he was happy, for he had saved them. The drums had not kept the promise of their message. Those of the mission still lived. He felt triumph; the doom told by the drums was not for them after all.

A Touch of Irish

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by

Glynn Bennion

Author of "Thribble H"

THE WINTER of 1878 hung on a long time in Castle Valley. When Spring finally broke and the snow began to melt on the passes, lanky Sid Swazey rode, leading a pack-horse, westward over the mountains into San Pete Valley. There, in the little Scandinavian town of Spring City he purchased tobacco, caps, powder and lead, and other supplies of like intrinsic value, to carry back to the cowboys, who for six long months had been unable to get "inside" for those commodities so dear to their hearts.

While making his purchases Swazey listened delightedly to the broken speech and queer idioms of the storekeeper as he told of the exploits of a sheepherder who, that very morning, had shot up the town following a drunken spree, and then had escaped eastward into the mountains.

"He iss ay ragly bad" asserted Lars Larson the storeman severely, piously indignant over such an affront to the peace and dignity of the law-abiding little hamlet.

Later, when Swazey carried his stuff out and began to load it on his pack-horse, he heard more about the incident from a group of easy-going native Yankees sitting on the

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shady side of the store. They were whittling with all the patient absorption of women knitting while they discussed the news. Like fans in a bleacher, they were passing on the chief actors in the episode the ready and confident judgments of those who never figure in events save as spectators.

"That's the start of another bad-man," said one of the curbstone philosophers sagely. "No need of it if he'd been handled right this morning."

He spat disgustedly, accurately showering an unfortunate horney toad's head with tobacco juice.

"I don't blame him for gittin' on the warpath after the way he was treated here," he continued positively, as with long, graceful strokes his practised hand drew a pocket-knife over a splinter of dry-goods box, shaving it to a beautiful and purposeless point. "But now he's plugged that depity sheriff he can't come back into decent sassiety no more. Smart feller, too. He'll think he's a reg'lar killer now."

"Say, that *hombre* was the greatest mimic I ever see," said another diligent whittler, parting his brown-stained lips in a juicy smile as he thought of the entertainment provided by the new desperado in times past. "He was my camp-tender out to Slow Elk one Winter when I was herdin' fer Rasmussen's outfit. Used tuh near die laughin' at 'im when he'd git to mockin' some o' these here —— Swedes an' Danes that's crowdin' us whites outa San Pete."

It was significant that no one present resented this remark. Two or three white-headed young fellows with blank, blond faces were there, who grinned sheepishly at this slur on their extraction. All the older Scandinavian element of the town were busy in the fields or in the stores.

Because their parents were ridiculed for their stolid countenances and broken speech and for taking the endless drudgery of life for granted in the stoical, unhumorous manner of twelve-year-old oxen, these young fellows failed to appreciate and be proud of the sturdy qualities of thrift and sobriety which made the old folks valuable citizens. The second generation sought to avoid being laughed at and to be regarded as regular fellows by aping the ways of the smart Yankees whose devil-may-care attitude and acute sense of the ridiculous made them seem so superior.

Most of these young Swedes failed to perceive that when they had achieved a second-hand stock of once vividly effective slang and irreverent witticisms, and could roll cigarets with carefully imitated expertness, they were still far from the real thing. Perhaps a choice few realized that the Yankees' apparent superiority was after all not due to these accomplishments which could be imitated, but rather to the American standard of self-reliant, two-fisted, upright manhood. A blond youth looked enviously at Swazey's cowboy trappings and admired the easy grace of the movements with which he loaded and lashed his stuff securely on the pack-horse.

"Vare you from?" he asked in a bold effort to engage the tall cowpuncher in conversation.

"Castle Valley," answered Swazey a bit curtly, without looking up from his task.

Instantly moved by that curious feeling of caste which everywhere impels men of one kind to protect each other from fraternizing advances of members of a lower class, the man who claimed to have herded sheep with the desperado, arose and walked over to the tie-post where Swazey was at work.

"That young Dutchman is liable to run into your outfit, ain't he, if he beats the posse over the mountains?"

"Don't think so," returned Swazey sociably, as he concluded an elaborate hitch on the pack with his lariat. "I figger he'll be makin' fer the Henry Mountains, an' if he knows the lay o' the land he'll take a trail that misses our camp by quite a ways. But if he ain't acquainted in that country he'll have a —— of a time to get anywhere."

"He's been on the other side in the Summer with sheep," said the herder. "He's got a good horse and an hour's start, so unless the snow bothers 'im he'll likely get away."

It was plain that the fellow's sympathies were all with the fugitive, and Swazey understood the unspoken appeal to extend protection in case the fleeing youth got into his range.

The pack having been adjusted to his liking, Swazey mounted and directed his horse eastward toward the high mountains separating San Pete from Castle Valley. As he drifted slowly out from the shady streets of the well-watered village on to the barren slope toward the foot-hills, he allowed his mind to piece together—having nothing else to do but fight the vicious Spring crop

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of mosquitoes—the story he had heard in fragments at Spring City.

He was inclined to agree with the town loafers that the trouble might have been averted if the sheriff's office had contained men of understanding hearts. From what he had heard, it appeared that Van Haarten, a young sheep-herder of celebrating proclivities, had ridden into Spring City several days previously with a Winter's pay and the youthful desire to punctuate the lonely monotony of sheep-herding with the hilarious abandonment of liquored-up sociability. In the foolish optimism of health and high spirits, and all the town loafers to applaud and assist in the enterprise, he had started in to drink the town dry. But "Earless Pete" Anderson, the saloonkeeper, had an endless supply of hardware on hand.

Finally young Van Haarten awoke one morning in a corner of the saloon feeling far less amiable toward the world than when he came there, and an impatient search failed to reveal even a copper cent in his pockets. He was broke again. Realizing that he had spent a whole Winter's pay in that saloon, and observing Earless Pete's grotesque visage where he was shifting glassware behind the bar, the youth arose and advanced toward him.

"Vell, how you vass dis morning?" inquired Earless Pete ingratiatingly.

But Van Haarten wasn't in good humor, so, ignoring the pleasant greeting, he said with a scowl:

"Guess I'm busted again, Pete. Pour me a stiff one to sober up on, an' lend me a dollar for breakfast, an' then I guess I'll be siftin' outa this here —— town."

Earless Pete's manner changed instantly. This victim had evidently been sucked dry sooner than he expected.

"Vat in da vorl' do you t'ink I iss?" he demanded savagely. "Do you t'ink I hand out money an' drinks to all da low-down bums dat come in here? You get off my place, or I t'row you out!"

Quick resentment seized Van Haarten's unstrung nerves as he heard the insulting language and noted the change in demeanor.

"The —— you will!" he retorted, drawing a heavy pistol from its holster. "Lemme see them dirty hands o' yourn. Good. Now use 'em tuh pull out that cash drawer, or I'll send yer —— nose where yer ears is. No, set it right here. Git them prayer handles 'way up there!"

When the angry youth had gathered a handful of coins into his pocket, he retreated toward the door. As he left the building he fired two shots, spoiling forever the big mirror behind the bar, which was the pride of Earless Pete's heart.

Gun in hand and seeing red, Van Haarten had then paraded up the street looking for the restaurant. Entering, he threw Pete's money on the counter and demanded hot coffee and rolls.

"Come to life!" he snapped at the sleepy-looking waitress whose bovine countenance and waddling gait bespoke the land of wooden shoes and the Cattegat.

The two or three startled customers in the place glanced up apprehensively at the big pistol laid on the counter and at the scowling face of its owner. Van Haarten was conscious of the scare he had thrown into them, and it made him all the more egotistically aware of his grievance. He drew from his rich, sheep-herder's vocabulary to find suitable epithets for Earless Pete, telling the whole world he'd finish teaching that skunk how to treat a white man next time he came to town, and concluded by cursing the town and everything in it without restraint.

Hearing shots at the saloon, some one had anticipated Earless Pete's movements by hurrying to the sheriff's office to inform that arm of the law of the possible trouble. The deputy sheriff was sent to investigate the matter and met Earless Pete running toward him, from whom he received a richly embellished account of the affair. Another citizen reported having seen the desperado enter the restaurant.

Already thoroughly scared, the nervous deputy hurried toward the eating-house. When fifty yards away he was chilled in the neck by the sight of Van Haarten emerging from the entrance, still holding the pistol in his hand.

"You're arrested!" yelled the excited deputy, at the same time opening fire on the sheep-herder. Van Haarten returned the fire with steady nerves, and the officer suddenly spun around, shot through the right shoulder. Hesitating for just a moment, apparently for the realization to soak in that he was now an outlaw instead of a citizen, the youth dashed across the street toward the place where his horse was stabled, firing a shot or two by way of intimidation over the heads of the men

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who came running into the street to see what was going on.

His bluff successful in scaring every one into submission, the now desperate sheep-herder hastily secured his horse, and, without waiting to find saddle and bridle, flung himself on bareback. Lashing the horse into a run, Van Haarten rode wildly out of the town toward the protection of the mountains. Half an hour later the sheriff and a dozen hastily gathered men followed his horse's trail at a run, confident that they would catch the fleeing youth before he could cross the snow-covered mountains into Castle Valley.

Moseying slowly along in the almost blinding sunlight, Swazey mused philosophically on the inevitable effect of the affair upon the unlucky Van Haarten. If he had been older he would have received scant sympathy from the tall cowman. But Swazey figured that almost any thoughtless and inexperienced boy was apt to fly off the handle with such provocation. Now the youth would consider himself an outcast forever, certain that every man's hand would henceforth be against him. Driven no less surely by this conviction than by the sheriff at his heels, the youth was bound to flee desperately toward the protection of Butch Cassidy's strong gang of renegades in the fastnesses of the Henry Mountains. There was nowhere else to go.

Best thing that could happen to all concerned, Swazey concluded, was for the youth to be killed by the posse up in the hills. He reflected that the chap would never forget the thrill of power experienced while he held the smoking pistol in his hand, nor the fear-smitten faces of the people he had bluffed with it. That memory, together with the evil associations likely to be formed if he escaped, and the feeling sure to develop that he now had a reputation as a gunman to keep up, would be certain to transform him from an ordinary sheep-herder into a genuine outlaw. That would mean one more rustler to contend with in Castle Valley.

At last Swazey drew into the foot-hills, and then, on account of the deep snow in the cañons, turned off the road and worked his way into the mountains by following the bare ridges, which were beginning to show as long, brown fingers reaching up toward the peaks. As the Indians put it, the white blanket of the mountains was getting torn. But only persons well acquainted with those hills would be able to find the places where a horse might cross thin snow from one ridge to another. A stranger in that vast labyrinth of snow-filled ravines and wind-swept ridges would soon be caught with his horse floundering in deep snow.

In the evening Swazey reached a place where a high ridge thrust a great stretch of steep side-hill at right angles against the slanting rays of the sun. Here the snow had all melted off, uncovering rich bunch-grass. Removing the saddle and pack from his horses, Swazey hobbled them out, and was soon camped for the night.

Next day, retracing the devious trail he had made on his way to Spring City, Swazey crossed the divide and commenced the long descent down the wild country to the Winter camps in Castle Valley. Late in the afternoon he arrived at his cabin. No one was there.

Swazey had been six days picking out the trail over the ridges of the San Pete Mountains on the outward trip, and he guessed that during that time the boys had completed the Spring round-up which was in full swing when he left, and would therefore likely all be gathered at some one camp or another for the usual jubilee.

As the cattle drifted westward up the long cañons toward the Summer range after the round-up, the work was usually light for a while. Then the punchers made up for the hardships of the rest of the year by celebrating at one another's camps, which included running in and breaking new horses for the Summer's riding.

Following his theory as to the whereabouts of his comrades, Swazey turned southward over the rough country toward Tom Simpers' camp. His hunch proved good, for at his neighbor's cabin on Ferron Creek he found the whole gang, who greeted him and his pack-horse with whoops of delight.

"Find the snow purty bad in the head of Cottonwood?" queried old man Ketchum by way of eliciting the reasons for Swazey's long absence.

Half a dozen cowboys started trying to solve Swazey's pet hitch on the pack.

"——, that ain't what kept Sid so long," said young Ol Acord as his lean fingers tugged earnestly at a particularly stubborn knot. "Bet he found Earless Pete feelin' porely an' had tuh set up three-four nights

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with 'im," he concluded with an insinuating grimace.

"Mebbe that be-eautiful big fat dish-smasher at the Hotel de Crum in Spring City mighty nigh persuaded our wild Irishman tuh settle down in San Pete, with a Danish daddy-in-law tuh boss 'im 'round," suggested another facetious youngster.

"Betcher life!" affirmed Swazey heartily. "All kee-rect."

He knew better than to deny any insinuations regarding his alleged aberrations.

"Still-an'-all, you bull-proddin' sons-o'-guns," he defended. "If yuh think I had a nice, easy time pickin' out a trail over them ridges, jist cast yer eagle objects back along my tracks. They's ashes uv twenty fires on that trail."

By this time the contents of the pack were spread out on the ground and the horses removed. Every cowboy present had already appropriated a sack of Duke's Mixture with requisite papers and was ecstatically rolling a cigaret. The next instant six right hind-legs were hoisted high, and six matches swished the length of their thighs. Then six hungry inhalations, and the long tobacco famine was broken!

"——, I'm glad I had tuh quit smokin'!" said Acord, grinning happily as he removed his burning cigaret long enough to spit. "I gained twenty pounds while we was outa makin's. I'm all healed up now tuh swaller a —— of a lot o' nicotine."

He inhaled again luxuriously.

"Git in!" called Simpers from the shack door. "Chuck's ready!"

All hands made for the entrance and soon were seated on slab benches around a table made of dry-goods boxes on which were placed a great fragrant roast of beef and steaming hot sour dough bread.

"Looks like yuh brung yer appetite back with yuh this time, Sid," observed Simpers, his first chance to frame a greeting, as Swazey carved off a huge chunk of beef and otherwise gave evidence of a she wolf's hunger. "Earless Pete outa business, eh?"

"Yer —— right!" returned Swazey when he was able to talk. "Anyway he was when I was there."

A concerned "Thasso?" chorused around the room and caused Swazey to explain—

"A feller that had been herdin' sheep too long shot up the saloon jist a few hours before I got there."

"Hooray!" shouted young Acord enthusiastically. Then inconsolably, "——, I'd like to 'a' seen that!"

In a moment he questioned:

"What did they do to the loco shep? Kill him tuh save the expense of takin' 'im tuh the 'sylum?"

Swazey chewed deliberately before answering.

"Guesso. Last I heard, the sheriff 'an a dozen depities was chasin' 'im into the hills. But I never seen no tracks ner nothin' else of the layout, so I guess they got 'im in the snow."

Supper over, that happy, satisfied feeling which succeeds the consumption of good grub, and which always renders frolicsome a gathering of men who ride much alone, settled down upon the assembled punchers. Ol Acord, reckless cowboy dandy, always irrepressibly gay when in company with men who ranked high as cow-hands and horsemen, but distantly superior or plotting mischief behind a camouflage of innocent companionship when in contact with those lacking he-manly accomplishments, cocked one foot on the table and looked regretfully at the myriad of bullet holes in the walls of the little log-cabin.

"Guess we'll have tuh wait till daylight to make them bullets," he wailed ruefully. "I ain't shot my pistol fer s'long I've fergot which end tuh take hold of."

"Hey, Jim!" he yelled enthusiastically at a homely, self-effacing individual who sat silently in a shadowed corner. Acord's mind seemed to leap upon a happy substitute for pistol smoke and tympanum-smashing reports.

"You gotta dance! Yuh don't need tuh be scairt yer box'll git shot to pieces under ye this time. They ain't a cartridge in Castle Valley. That's why Simp used that bran' new coffee-pot tonight."

Acord glanced lovingly at the shiny coffee-pot simmering by the fireplace, which boded no good to it if it were in sight on the morrow.

Acord's suggestion met with instant approval, and Jim Maynard, blushing and awkwardly protesting inability to perform, was finally seized and catapulted toward the fireplace.

"Here y' are, Jim!" said Simpers as he passed over a long narrow box, perhaps eight inches square at the ends and two feet long. "I made this special fer you today."

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Seeing no chance of escape, Jim Maynard set the box on end and mounted it, balancing unsteadily thereon with arms and huge hands extended, his big, shapeless feet protruding beyond the edges of the box on every side. Not at all expert with horse, gun or rope, the one accomplishment that endeared him to the cowboys was his ability to clog-dance. His ungainly appearance and evident difficulty to avoid falling off that tall box, however, gave no promise of it. Then he started to dance, and as his feet began to paw the air and rap the top of the box, the aspect of unstable equilibrium vanished. Although the box swayed and gyrated drunkenly with the measure of the dance and the beat of those big feet, it seemed as sure to keep right side up as a motor-cycle roaring around a saucer track.

Soon hands were clapping and boots tapping, and presently the irrepressible cowboy "Yip! Yip!" kept time while that remarkable dance grew wilder and faster, until the dimly lighted space in front of the fireplace seemed an indistinct blur of waving arms and thrashing, thumping legs and feet.

Suddenly the box was kicked away as if by magic and the bashful, awkward fellow stood on the floor, grinned apologetically, and sought obscurity again in a corner. Possessing no other members of like outstanding accomplishments, the celebrants turned to the excitement of poker, and during the remainder of the evening many a sudden wail of lamentation and accompanying estatic yelp denoted that a coveted horse or firearm or cherished article of cowboy accouterment had changed owners.

NEXT morning a division of labor was agreed upon. Swazey and several others were detailed to locate and run in a band of branded, half-broken horses that ranged uncertainly between Ferron Creek and the breaks of the Queetchumpah. Such horses are always more difficult to control than those which have never been brought into brief contact with man's punishing hands. Ol Acord and Jim Maynard devoted themselves to making bullets from the materials which Swazey had brought. Simpers busied himself with small chores about the camp. The fun would begin in the afternoon when, if the riders were successful in bringing the broncos in, a number of outlaws would be caught and ridden.

Late in the forenoon Acord tired of pouring hot lead into various-sized bullet-molds, and abruptly ceasing his labors thereat, wandered for distraction on to one of the blue clay eminences overlooking the camp. As he stood there eagerly scanning the distant range for signs of the horse-wranglers, he suddenly gave a joyous yelp. Far away he could see a heavy, white line streaking like wild-fire across the prairie toward a break in the cliff-scarred hills which loomed in the western distance. But far to the right of this larger dust-line could be clearly distinguished the tiny parallel dust-line of a lone rider, who was moment by moment increasing his lead in the race for the gap in the cliffs.

"Sid's a-beating 'em to the gap!" Acord yelled back to Jim Maynard, who was patiently turning out bullet after bullet. "In two minutes he'll have 'em headed this way an' the other boys'll be herdin' 'em in toward the wings."

In a few minutes Acord turned around and quickly descended from the knoll.

"Everybody outa sight!" he commanded and made for the cabin.

Maynard and Simpers followed suit.

Presently the band of wildly racing horses, now crowded into a compact bunch, came thundering down over the blue clay breaks above the creek-bottoms. Furiously riding horsemen on lathering, sweat-blackened mounts rode close in on each side of the band compelling its leaders to enter the wide mouth of the funnel-shaped wings of the entrance to the horse pasture.

The moment the gate was closed on the horses Swazey came riding swiftly back toward the cabin. Acord and Maynard stepped out to meet him. Before the panting horse was reined in Swazey was speaking:

"Say, they's a young Swede tenderfoot comin' down the trail. Sure is some boob. Says he's walked all the way from San Pete, an' he's looking fer a job herdin' cows. Wow! Looks like he was —— near starved. I tol' him we'd captured that Van Haarten outlaw, and had 'im corraled in the cabin waitin' fer the sheriff, but tuh come in an' git a bite anyway. Jim, you be guardin' Ol when the kid comes along, an' throw a scare into 'im. The rest of us'll git into them cottonwoods."

Having delivered himself, Swazey whirled his horse about and rode off to the clump

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of cottonwoods by the stream where the other riders were already gathered with intent to watch the proceedings secretly. Nothing could have suited their ideas of the fitness of things better than to have a green young San Peter fall into their hands on this day of jubilee. Tobacco, new cartridges, and a band of the wildest, meanest outlaws in Castle Valley captured and ready to be caught and ridden; and as if that were not enough to fill their cup of joy to repletion, along comes a tenderfoot to be hazed! That put the final touches to a perfect celebration.

The hazing instinct is as basic in human nature as self-preservation. A man desires to keep his life and those things which enlarge it. An organization seeks to perpetuate itself and its character by insisting that recruits bring into it no disintegrating elements. Thus, the freshman is hazed and the rookie crawled until they conform to type. By the same token, any would-be individual caught seeking the high rank of cow-hand is apt to be variously afflicted until in humiliation he perceives that he doesn't know sic 'em.

The watching celebrants had not long to wait until their victim came in sight, following the dusty trail the horses had made. Tall, loose-jointed, big hands swinging awkwardly at the ends of long arms, a towsled shock of light hair sticking in gobs from under his weather-beaten hat, he looked the picture of clumsy stupidity as he walked stumblingly down the pathway. On his wooden countenance was implanted a look of hungry eagerness as he advanced directly toward the cabin.

Coming into the open doorway, he stood silently and stupidly gazing around the room. On one side of the table sat Jim Maynard, a big .45 lying across his knees, and near him and facing him sat Ol Acord, arms folded, head lowered and hat drawn partially to hide his scowling face. Neither said a word.

Finally Maynard looked up to say:

"Git in! This is home sweet home."

In a moment he added—

"Hungry?"

"You bet Ay vass, too!" said the youth, without a flicker of his expressionless features.

"You'll have to help yerself, I guess," Maynard said: "I'm holdin' this here outlaw till the sheriff of San Pete gits here. You'll find some meat hangin' outside on the north wall, an' there's some cold bread wrapped up in that dish-towel on the table. There's some coffee in the grub-box, an' the pot sets on that shelf there." He nodded toward Simpers' new coffee-pot.

Standing motionless for a moment, apparently for this combined invitation and information to be absorbed, the famished-looking San Peter turned his attention on the fireplace. After kindling a generous fire he procured the remains of a six-months-old bull calf as directed and in a moment had a great thick slice of juicy beef broiling in the frying-pan. Then he set a pot of coffee to boil. Covertly watching the San Peter's skilful manipulation of camp grub, Acord mentally concluded that at any rate the fellow wouldn't make a bad cook for a cow-outfit.

At intervals during the preparation of his meal, the light-haired youth paused to eye the captive apprehensively, much to Acord's delight. Maynard seemed on the verge of sleep. Presently he began to snore gently.

Just as the ravenous San Peter had assembled his meal and commenced to eat noisily thereof, Acord suddenly leaped forward, grabbed the pistol on Maynard's knees, and commenced firing rapidly. Maynard tumbled heavily to the floor. The startled youth from San Pete rose from a squatting position at the sudden violence, holding out the frying-pan full of still sizzling steak. Suddenly a bullet jerked the pan from his hand and threw its contents into the fire. Another plopped into the new coffee-pot, which belched its contents all over the room. Even the fallen Maynard rolled over when the scalding spray splashed him. The white-headed San Peter ran forthwith from the shack, making a bee-line for the horse corral, Acord's bullets kicking up little spurts of dust on either side of him as he ran.

A murmur of mirthful applause came from the cottonwoods, and presently four men appeared leading their horses to the accompaniment of jingling spurs and creaking saddle-leather. The drooping heads of the horses and the rolling, bow-legged gait of the men bespoke the recent hard riding. Grinning faces and audible chuckling greeted the bedraggled San Peter when they came upon him crouched behind the high palisade corral. Noticing the boy's

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heavy pistol dangling in the awkwardly placed holster, Swazey pulled a grave face and rebuked the wooden-looking youth.

"My, my, where was that cannon all the time? Fergit yuh had one on?"

The youth sheepishly eyed his weapon.

"Vell, Ay didn't had any cartridges, neider," he said, looking up, a disgustingly foolish grin spreading over his vacuous, pudding-pie face.

Swazey stepped forward and relieved the youth of his empty gun.

"Don'tcha never let nobody in Castle Valley ketch yuh with this thing on again," he said severely. "This here's a man's gun. Cowboys is sure mean fellers with pistols. They might take yuh fer that San Pete outlaw if they seen yuh comin' with this artillery on, an' they'd shoot so much lead into yuh yer carcass'd git valuable. Besides, yuh can't run fast with that thing hangin' on to yer laig thataway."

At that moment Acord appeared again in the cabin doorway, dragging Maynard out by the heels, whom he dumped none too gently into a depression near the cabin.

"Bring that —— of a San Pete Swede back here tuh bury this carcass!" he called profanely to the men at the corrals. "We can't have anything dead layin' around here in the sun."

"Whatcha been killin' pore ole Jim fer?" Swazey remonstrated as the four men approached the cabin bringing the San Peter.

"Had to," explained Acord innocently. "He was snorin', an' I told him last Winter I'd shoot 'im if he ever done it again."

At that moment Maynard sat up and rubbed the back of his head where it had been bumped when Acord dragged him out. Acord whirled toward him drawing his pistol, but Swazey caught his arm and made him holster his weapon.

"——; I thought he was dead!" said Acord. "Guess I made a mistake shootin' 'im in the head," he added reflectively. "Next time I'll shoot 'im in the feet an' blow both 'is brains out!"

Swazey went over to Maynard and examined his head critically. "Jist creased 'im this time, Ol. Yer aim was pore. Yer outa practise."

But Acord wasn't listening. He jerked out his pistol and advanced on the Swede, grabbing him by the shirt collar.

"You —— cockroach," he said. "Next time I hear you chewing meat with yer mouth open I'll wrap the barrel o' my pistol around yer head, *sabe?*"

Then he swung the San Peter around and marched him back into the cabin.

"Now you clean up that mess," he ordered. "An' after this don'tcha never try tuh eat at the first table again."

The others watched aghast as the big Swede meekly complied with the dapper little cowpuncher's order.

"Ain't no more fight in 'im than a shaved porkypine!" murmured one of the men.

Presently Simpers appeared on the scene, ruefully viewed the ruins of his coffee-pot, and then set about frying beef for the noon meal. As he worked he questioned the young Swede sitting glumly apart from the cowboys, who continued to indulge in the tom-foolery of young men who refuse to sorrow over the somber things of life.

"Where'd yuh come from, young feller?"

The Swede responded to the note of kindliness in the other man's voice.

"Ay yust come from San Pete," he answered with sheep-like meekness.

"Why did yuh leave the old folks on the farm?" queried Simpers further, holding his head to one side and eying the frying-pan to avoid the hot splashes of grease as he turned the sizzling steaks over.

"Vell," came the naive answer, "de ole man tank Ay don't know anything, so Ay yust go avay to herd sheep ellor somet'ing."

"Ain't no sheep around here," growled Simpers as he forked the meat into a large platter. "An' I don't know as any of us needs any help with cattle right now. Better go back to San Pete an' show the old man where tuh head in at if he rides yuh too much. Chances are he'll be so —— glad tuh see yuh back tuh work he'd let yuh lick 'im." Simpers' voice trailed off into a high falsetto as he finished his advice.

But apparently the San Peter had guts and wouldn't be easily turned from his purpose.

"Iss it any ranches east from here?" he asked.

For a moment Simpers was busy clattering tin knives and forks and plates around the table before he spoke.

"They's nobody between here an' the Colorado but Butch Cassidy an' his gang of cattle rustlers. An' I don't think he'd hire you," he answered with a chuckle.

"But if you're —— bent on gittin' experience out in the wicked world, yuh

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might take the old Frémont trail to the north after yuh git past the Trestle. They's some sheep and cow-outfits in that new Uintah country, an' 'tain't fer from there into Colorado. But that's three-four days ride on a good horse. What in —— are yuh doing in this country afoot?" he asked, eying the boy severely.

"Maybe you vould borrow me a horse, and Ay could pay you ven Ay get me some money?" hopefully suggested the San Peter.

Simpers ignored the question, and ordered all hands to slip their nose-bags on. All immediately squared around to their places at the table except the youth from San Pete, who remained nervously looking out through the door.

"Come on, git yer feet wet, kid!" commanded Simpers kindly. "Don't let Ol here run no razoo on yuh."

"Ay t'ink Ay vill go up to look at dose horses," said the youth, and started for the door.

But Ol Acord hopped over his bench and headed the blond youth off.

"No yuh don't!" he ordered. "Git in there an' git yer dinner. Only don't chew with yer mouth open. We've got tuh have yuh feelin' fit when yuh ride them broncs this afternoon."

Most of this was said as he pushed the greenhorn to a place at the table.

Dinner over, all except two unfortunates detailed to wash up the dishes filed out of the cabin and sat on their heels in the shade of the cabin walls for a few moments while they picked their teeth and seriously proposed the afternoon's events. For the moment they forgot their tenderfoot in other interests.

"D'ja see that palomino chokin' them fantails with heel dust this mornin', Ol?" asked Swazey, a grin of proud possession on his face as he pivoted on his foot toward the yellow horse's erstwhile owner.

Acord signified a weak affirmative with a slight sidewise jerk of his head.

"That's my horse," Swazey continued, maliciously intent on rubbing in Acord's unfortunate poker playing of the night before. "I'm a-going tuh fork him this afternoon."

Acord remembered regretfully seeing at a distance the remarkably fine-looking buckskin leading the band of wild horses as they ran strung out in a long line before the cowboys began to crowd in on them; and how the big horse had easily kept his lead, even when the riders, spurring hard to maintain control of the band as they neared the horse pasture, had crowded the racing horses into a compact bunch. But the little cowpuncher never acknowledged a sore spot or lost an opportunity to insinuate his superior horsemanship.

"He's got the looks," Acord agreed. "But you'll git throwed, Sid. Better let me ride 'im. Don'tcha know he's the meanest horse in Castle Valley?"

"You go to ——!" said Swazey good-humoredly. "When I have tuh wear wooden laigs I'll let you break my outlaws."

Unnoticed during this argument, the San Pete youth had rescued his gun and holster from where Swazey had thrown them and, unseen, had managed to pick out half a dozen cartridges of suitable caliber from the box which Maynard and Acord had been filling. Then with holster buckled in the position as worn by Swazey, he approached the squatting punchers.

"Let me ride von off dat vild horses," he said earnestly.

The astounding request knocked the cowboys completely off their balance, compelling them to drop the long fingers of each right hand to the ground to steady themselves as they swung around on their heels to blink up at the greenhorn. Then they remembered their victim and their duty.

"—— if he ain't went and put his war clothes on again!" laughed Swazey. "Come on, let's get 'im a horse," he added, slapping his knee and rising.

"By ——, let's!" profanely approved another, and the whole chuckling, bow-legged party arose and made for their horses tied in the corral.

Mounted, they trotted leisurely abreast into the horse pasture, heading toward a far corner where the band of wild horses were gathered and looking apprehensively toward them.

There was no call for hard riding this time. The horses realized they were trapped, and the riders made no effort to crowd them as they secured a position behind the band and began to drive them in toward the corral. The men remaining at the cabin kept carefully out of sight.

Presently the leaders, forced forward by pressure from behind, were cautiously and fearfully approaching the corral, and surrounding the sides and rear of the band

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the horsemen rode slowly and silently, tensely concentrating every nerve on unostentatiously keeping in exactly the right place to prevent a break to get away.

When the horses were safely shut in the corral, the San Pete greenhorn appeared from out the saddle-room with a rawhide lariat wrapped tightly about his waist and a pair of spurs strapped on his worn boots. At any other time such liberties with some one else's property would not have been tolerated, but as the official victim of the afternoon sport, his conduct was oyerlooked.

"How skal Ay ketch dat horse?" he asked in a tone of lamb-like confidence.

Ol Acord swung his horse away from his comrades and rode over to the strangely togged-out youth. He leaned forward gracefully, hand and breast resting on the horn of the saddle, as he spoke confidentially—

"I'll tell you how a real cowman ketches an' rides one o' them wrangs in there."

He indicated with a wave of his hand the horses in the corral.

"Yuh climb up on the bar post an' then some one pulls out the bars an' drives the horses out o' the c'rel, *sabe?* Then when the horses is crowdin' out yuh pick out the one yuh wanta ride an' jump on to 'im."

Acord looked as innocent as a month-old pup as he imparted this information. The San Peter apparently neither resented Acord's patronage nor responded to his show of fellowship and recognition. His face was as void of expression as ever when he said simply—

"Ay vill twy dat."

Too stunned to express in words their surprize at the greenhorn's evident intention the astonished cowboys cocked knees over saddle-horns and proceeded to roll cigarets while the boy walked toward the corral bars. Their eyes never once left his figure until he was calmly perched on top of a bar post overlooking the milling horses inside the corral. Then, having rolled and licked their unseen cigarets, they turned with one accord toward each other and a solemn "I'll be ——!" was chorused. Not a move was made until the San Peter, turning toward them called out—

"Von off you cowherderss, let dat horses out!"

Ol Acord looked inquiringly at the others. Swazey, speaking for the rest of them, voiced their feeling that the decision to go through with the play or drop it rested with its originator.

"It's up to you, Ol."

An extra glint of deviltry showed in Acord's eyes.

"All right," he said a bit defiantly, and swung gracefully off his horse to the ground. He walked to the corral bars and pulled them all out, leaving the gateway open. But the horses feared to pass the silent, figure standing on top of the bar post.

"Say, that fool kid'll kill 'is self!" demurred Simpers. "'Sall right tuh see the kid git throwed, but he'll be a —— of a mess tuh gather up an' take back to San Pete after them horses git th'oo trompin' on 'im."

Simpers started toward the corral to remonstrate with the youth. But Acord, returning, headed him off.

"Oh, hold on Simp," he said easily in a lowered voice. "Whoever heard of a drunk or a greenhorn gittin' hurt by a horse? Anyway, the kid's afraid for scare. He won't jump."

No one else interfered, and as Acord tied up his horse and otherwise prepared to drive the horses out, all subsided into silence. Every man realized the fearful chances for a nasty accident in case the boy did as he appeared resolved to do. But considering that Acord's judgment of the youth's nerve was correct, they were willing to leave the initiative and its responsibility with the reckless, mischief-loving little puncher.

Calling to the men to follow him, Acord walked around to the side of the corral opposite the bars. Then he climbed up on the high palisade wall and jumped with a yell and flourish of his hat into the space which the horses quickly vacated in their first scared movement to crowd away from him. The heavy weight of many horses thrown suddenly against the crowded animals pushed several unwilling horses out through the open gateway. These finding themselves past the man on the bar post, dashed wildly out to the field, and the horses next the gateway, tempted too strongly by sight of their mates fleeing to freedom, jumped out after them. Soon the whole band was crowding frantically out, four to six abreast, regardless of the enemy above them.

The San Pete greenhorn made no move, nor did he appear to be watching the horses

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as they crushed past him. He seemed to be eagerly sizing up those remaining in the corral. Then, as the last of the band pressed furiously out through the gateway, he flung himself, arms outstretched, upon the backs of the six horses struggling to get out at once. On the side of the gateway opposite the youth, the big palomino, with an inch wide black stripe from mane to tale, snorted and lunged as he felt the boy's hand on his mane. He was by long odds the biggest, handsomest, wildest horse in the bunch. Evidently the boy had been waiting for him. Taking quick advantage of the instant's crowding rush through the gateway, the youth jerked himself over the backs of the animals beneath him and was astride the buckskin, securing firm hold with legs and hands, before the horses could get out far enough to spread.

Running clear of the crowding animals, the big horse squared away for action. Then commenced an exhibition of the wickedest bucking ever seen in Castle Valley. The horse made of himself and his rider a great whip, with the boy's head as the lash. Failing in the first furious effort to tear loose the strong, spur-biting grip on his ribs, the outlaw kept on bucking as if determined to pop the youth's head off like an overused whip-lash.

In the absence of a saddle, hands had to perform the function of saddle-fork and cantle, and with spurs stuck deep into the maddened horse's ribs, the boy pulled his head into his shoulders to prevent it from rocking. The tightly wrapped lariat about his waist preserved his "innards" from damage. For the rest, he simply clung on in desperation and took fearful punishment. His face and shirt were already bespattered with blood from his nose and ears, and still there was no let-up to the awful tearing, jerking, thumping of that cruel bucking.

The watchers had dismounted and perched themselves on the corral fence for better observation. They sat there in awestruck silence, capable only of astonished wonder. Then, when the boy, perceiving that he finally had the upper hand, began to rake the outlaw's sides in the approved cowboy fashion for subduing a mean horse, they broke spontaneously into wild cheers. It is always thus with Americans anywhere. Let any one pull off a real, he-manly stunt, and if Yankees are there to see, they are bound to demonstrate unrestrained appreciation, whatever the performer's color, creed or national extraction may be.

On the east side of the horse pasture was a gateway of bars, which closed the trail leading eastward from the ranch. This trail ascended directly toward one of the long cliff-lines which erect north and south barriers along the eastern side of Castle Valley. In the days when the famous warchief, Black Hawk, with his savage warriors, raided the San Pete villages, driving looted stock over the mountains into the fastnesses of that awful labyrinth of cliffs and stupendous gorges leading eastward to the Colorado River, the only crossing for horsemen over this particular cliff-line was at a point ten miles south of Simpers' Ferron Creek ranch.

In order to avoid this wide detour when riding into the eastern ranges, the cattlemen had recently erected a crude trestlework of cottonwood timbers at a point directly east of Simpers' ranch, where a vertical precipice of only fifteen feet separated them from the country beyond. Over this rough viaduct horses and cattle could be walked in safety.

Leaning well forward, and with one hand reaching toward the horses' eye and nose, the San Pete youth seemed to be maneuvering his horse toward the gateway in the pasture's inclosing buck-fence. The big outlaw had given up straight bucking now, and was alternating that with spurts of running. He was becoming discouraged, and the hand at the side of his face was plainly bewildering him.

However, as he approached the fence near the gateway, the wild horse broke into one more blind fury of bucking. Whirling halfway round in mid-air in one of his mad lunges, he landed in the buck-fence. Miraculously escaping death on the many stakes of the crazy fence, the horse tumbled headlong over it, landing on his back, and throwing his rider sprawling into a rabbit bush.

The horse scrambled to regain his feet, but his rider was quicker. Pouncing like a cat on to the buckskin's head, he threw him back to the ground, pinning the head down securely with his knees. Then he rapidly unwound the lariat from his waist and tied a crude hackamore on the horse's head. Releasing his paralyzing hold, he stepped back and then swung astride the animal's back as it rose to its feet.

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The crashing fall over the fence, the hard bump when he landed, and the experience of being held and manipulated by a man's subduing hands, had temporarily taken all the fight out of the horse. When he felt the end of the lariat lash his sides, he made no further effort to buck, but bolted eastward along the trail toward the cliff-line.

Up to this time the watchers on the corral had clung to their perches entirely oblivious of anything but the wonder of that marvelous horsemanship. But now, as the yellow horse and his rider disappeared in the dust-cloud set up by the beat of his racing feet, consciousness that they had been thoroughly sold dawned on them. Sudden comprehension came to Swazey's mind and he dropped to the ground. He landed running toward his horse.

"Come on fellers!" he yelled. "That ain't no greenhorn. He's stealin' my horse."

This last was said as the tall cowman swung into his saddle. The others followed as fast as their crooked legs would let them. But before they were clear of the corrals, a loud haloo in the rear compelled them to face about and see a small cavalcade of horsemen trotting toward the ranch from the west.

These rode directly up to the impatient cowboys and without ceremony dismounted to rest the backs of their hard-ridden horses. A big man with black mustaches left his horse and stepped toward the silent punchers. He wasted no time on preliminaries.

"Howdy, men. I'm the sheriff of San Pete County, an' we're lookin' fer a man that shot one o' my deputies couple days ago. We've trailed 'im this way. He lost 'is horse in the snow crossing the mountains an' got down in here somewhere afoot. Seen anything of a tall, light-haired young feller lately? Looks like a Swede."

The cowboys swung their horses in the direction they had first taken. The tiny dust-cloud was rapidly approaching the cliff-line. Swazey turned in his saddle toward the officer. He wanted to be sure of his ground.

"Kin he ride a bit?"

"Can he ride?" echoed the sheriff by way of preparing the whole world for an emphatic affirmative. "W'y, that feller rode Long Tom with a dry cowhide tied to his tail on the Fourth at Saliny, last year!"

Swazey whistled softly and turned to his comrades, who smiled grimly. They had all heard of Long Tom, the most famous bucking outlaw in all San Pete. Then Swazey pointed to the faraway dust speck.

"I guess that's your man. We're after 'im, too."

The weary eyes and gaunt, unwashed cheeks and parched lips of the sheriff and his men bespoke extreme fatigue. But the officer was plucky.

"Gimme a fresh horse an' I'll ride with yuh."

Then he turned to his posse.

"You boys stay here; no need o' more'n me going."

Jim Maynard spurred his horse toward the sheriff and stepped off.

"Take my horse, sheriff. He's good, and I wouldn't be no help, anyway."

Maynard bashfully avoided looking at the big officer as he held out the reins. The sheriff's faculties were too intent on swift pursuit to permit of a word or look of appreciation. He grabbed the bridle and saddle-horn, swung heavily into the seat, and spurred savagely to overtake Swazey who was riding eastward, his thoughts entirely dominated by a stockman's instinct to visit swift punishment on a horse-thief. He wasn't easily overtaken.

THE men rode in silence, those behind entirely occupied with the choking dust, and those in lead looking eagerly at the now empty horizon. The fugitive was over the breaks. But Swazey felt certain of soon capturing him. No range-horse living, carrying a heavy weight for the first time, could long outrun hardened saddle-horses.

Then Swazey and the sheriff, galloping ahead of the dust, saw smoke over the horizon.

For a moment their strained faces indicated perplexity. Then Swazey cursed, and his yellow horse seemed very far away. Turning toward the sheriff he shouted above the noise of pounding feet—

"He's fired the trestle!"

Compelling still greater speed, the two men withheld expression of their hopes and fears until closer approach should reveal the true situation.

The riders were now near the jumping-off place where in some remote geologic age an already badly scarred portion of

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the earth's crust had been pushed up and the adjoining part had sunk down, leaving a long, sardonically grinning wall of sandstone facing eastward to take its own time in wearing away. At the place where the trail disappeared over the breaks erosion had marred the wall of the precipice with a miniature box cañon, down which it was possible to go with stock until within fifteen feet of the bottom. Here a barrier of perpendicular descent had been bridged by an incline of rough trestle-work.

The men reined in their horses at the top of the declivity. One hundred yards below them was the trestle, a vigorous blaze beginning to climb up the cottonwood timbers from a large brush fire at its base. The figure of a man was seen carrying an armful of sticks toward the fire. At the appearance of his pursuers he hastily dropped his bundle and jumped behind a big boulder that at some time had fallen from the cliffs above and rolled out to its resting place.

The sheriff's spur-stung horse jumped down the steep trail.

"Git down, men an' put that fire out!" he yelled, as his big arms and shoulders heaved to absorb the jar of his horse's hard, downward lunges.

But just as the others started to follow something snapped under the sheriff's horse, and the animal fell rolling down the steep rocky hillside. As he fell the sharp report of a pistol came up clear from below, and a puff of blue haze hung for a moment above the boulder where the man below had sought cover. The horsemen on the rim of the breaks wheeled back over the sky-line, where they quickly dismounted and tied their horses to the scrub mahoganies growing there.

Then they ran back to see what had happened to the sheriff. His horse had risen and was vainly trying to steady himself with three legs on the steep side-hill. Near by, the sheriff rose on hands and knees and vomited. Then he commenced to crawl up the trail, his darkly tanned face showing a sickly gray.

"I'm all right, boys," he said weakly as he was pulled behind a boulder on the summit and laid on his back. "—— horse fell on me. Git that feller down there if yuh can."

Then he groaned and tried to shift himself into an easier position. Perceiving that the sheriff was not seriously hurt—just badly wrenched and mauled—the cowboys left him and took counsel.

"——, I never seen him git away with any cartridges!" Acord voiced his surprize at the outlaw's shooting. "What size gun did he have on, Sid? You took it off 'im, once," he finished with a snicker, which Swazey ignored.

"—— if I noticed clost," Swazey regretted. "Believe it was a .44 though."

"It that's the case, he ain't got many cartridges," Acord figured. "I only made 'bout six of that size, an' I know Jim never made any."

But Swazey wasn't listening. Suddenly he rose to his feet, determination written on his lean, weather-carved features.

"You fellers hold 'im here as long as yuh kin. —— if I don't b'lieve I kin head 'im off yet!"

Then Swazey mounted his horse and departed northward along the edge of the breaks, keeping well below the skyline.

Having no personal interest in the outcome of events other than that of preserving a whole skin and enjoying the excitement, Acord was inclined to be humorously affected by the situation and its prospects. Nevertheless, he didn't neglect its graver aspects or forget that quick action was imperative. In Swazey's absence, the other three punchers looked to Acord for leadership.

It looked bad for getting the important thing done quickly. The desperado's stolen horse was tied well out of pistol-range, and the open nature of the descent to the blazing trestle-work made it nothing short of suicide to try to put out the now rapidly growing flames. Already the lower end of the structure was in ruin, and it was only a matter of moments until the whole thing would crash to the ground.

It therefore seemed that the only practicable thing to do was to exhaust if possible the fugitive's ammunition, and then try to prevent him from getting away with his horse. Considering that being one hundred yards above the desperado he was almost beyond accurate pistol-range, Acord decided to risk a rapid descent to a jutting edge of rock near the place where the wounded horse was pathetically trying to climb back up the grade. Accordingly, the little cowpuncher suddenly emerged from cover and bounded like a mountain sheep down the steep declivity to the outthrust ledge. Even so, a bullet smacked

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into the outer edge of the rock barely a split second late, and pinged off into space with a business-like warning.

Acord was by no means a coward, yet such evidence of expert marksmanship took all the allurement out of any further descent while the outlaw's ammunition held out. In the tumult of hot fighting a man's nerves may temporarily lose their dread of flying bullets; but no sane man on earth can calmly determine to draw a tangible enemy's accurate fire without being keenly disturbed when the time comes to make a target of himself. His mind will eagerly consider anything that holds out a possibility, however remote, of avoiding the risk.

So Acord tried the old trick of putting his hat on a stick and pushing it out past the edge of the rock. But it didn't work. The fugitive had no cartridges to spare.

Signaling the men waiting above him to remain under cover, Acord suddenly stepped out into full view, fired a shot at the desperado's hiding-place, and instantly hopped back to cover. But not quick enough this time. A heavy bullet, luckily turned aside by his hairy chaps, struck the side of his leg, hitting with such tremendous force that for a moment the whole limb was numbed and paralyzed. From his shelter he grinned up at his comrades.

"Some tenderfoot down there!" he called.

By this time the trestle-work was blazing along its entire length and presently collapsed in a cloud of smoke and ashes. Suddenly the desperado was seen to leave cover and run for his horse, which was tied behind a scrubby piñon-pine three hundred yards away. Instantly sensing that here was the weak spot in the fugitive's plans, Acord limped out from behind his shelter and called to his companions.

"Now's the time tuh git 'im!" he yelled. "He's going tuh have one —— of a time getting on that horse!"

His words were unnecessary, and in fact unheard in the rattle of sliding rocks as the three men came bounding down the narrow, ravine-like descent. They had hoped to be able to jump off the edge of the rocks at the place where the upper end of the trestle-work had rested, but when they arrived there they found the entire space below a wreck of scattered, half-burned timbers. To risk a fifteen-foot jump into that smoking ruin would be sheer folly.

It was therefore necessary to discover some other way of descent. Remembering a shelving ledge running at right angles to the trail some distance above them, Acord scrambled back up to it, calling to the others to follow. Crawling southward along this narrow shelf, he at last found what he expected—a weather-widened crevice leading downward, almost vertically, to the ground, which at this point was nearly one hundred feet below. The descent was a hazardous one, but he knew no other way to get down. As he calculated the time required to make a safe descent he was building his hopes on the difficulties he felt sure the desperado would encounter when he tried to remount his bronco.

The fugitive had now reached the tree where the horse was tied. Hearing the swift approach, the scared buckskin jerked back on the tough rawhide, his four feet dug into the white clay, and his nose pulled into line with his straining neck. The man checked his speed and strove to overcome the appearance of haste as he came around the tree. But the yellow horse reared wildly at sight of his captor, jerking his head from side to side in the mad hope of breaking the taut rawhide, and clawing futilely at it with his front feet. When he came down he struck savagely at the man.

During the time the horse had been tied behind the pine-tree he had fully recovered his wind and all his former savage determination to resist submission. When the man continued his advances, the furious horse lunged away at the end of his rope, smashing the brittle limbs of the gnarled tree. As he thrashed back and forth to avoid his captor he always kept in position to strike out either with front or hind feet if his enemy came within reach.

Before mounting, it was necessary to free the horse from the tree, which, it was now seen, couldn't be done quickly without cutting the rope. Given plenty of time, an expert horseman could have approached and untied the jammed knots. Then with the advantage of a long rope tied securely to the buckskin's nose and head, a bronco's weak spot, he could sooner or later break the fighting spirit.

But there was no time for such slow, cautious maneuvering. And hasty methods gave all the advantage to the horse. In tying the animal to the tree, the desperado had doubled the braided rawhide lest the horse in hanging back break the single rope.

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Therefore, if the rope were cut the man would have only a short piece to hold to, and the whirling animal would immediately have his tormenter at the mercy of his heels.

The hopelessness of the situation surged in upon the fugitive's milling thoughts and caused a lightning flicker of uneasiness as to the whereabouts of his pursuers. Instantly he was out from behind the tree looking eagerly for them.

After a moment's straining search his eyes focused on the four cowboys clinging high up on the rock wall. In desperation the youth drew his pistol and fired two futile shots at the descending figures. The men on the face of the cliff hung motionless for the space of five seconds and then, sensing the safety of their three hundred yards' distance, resumed the slow descent.

With only one bullet left, and maddened by the thought that Fate had stacked the cards against him, the youth whirled back to look at the struggling horse, his mind a throbbing confusion of half-formed schemes for escape. As he started to push his pistol back into its holster, his seething brain pulled up short on an idea that in unhurried moments wouldn't have been given a second's consideration. Acting instantly on that wild impulse he pulled up his pistol and fired point blank at the horse hanging tensely back on the rawhide rope.

The buckskin dropped like a beef to the ground, where he lay quivering, his legs stretched rigidly forward and his head wagging feebly back and forth, nose out on the tight rope. His eyes were closed and his lips parted loosely like an old work horse dozing. Half-way between ears and withers a tuft of coarse, yellow hair appeared to lose its foothold in the mane and slowly rolled aside, revealing a reddening spot on top of the animal's neck where the bullet had creased him.

Holstering his empty gun and jerking out a knife with the same motion the youth now leaped to the tree, slashed the jammed knots, and grabbing the severed rope, swung on to the horse's back just as the animal dazedly rose to a sitting posture.

As the horse staggered to his feet and moved drunkenly out from the tree, the youth began to lash and tug furiously at the hackamore to turn the animal eastward lest when he recovered his senses he should rush, bucking blindly, directly toward the cowboys. At that moment a yell from the cliffs announced the descent achieved, and the boy looked back to see four men running toward him.

Luckily for the fugitive, his pursuers failed to see that the queerly-acting horse was trying to come toward them, his instincts blindly directing him back toward his old range. Not knowing which way the horse would turn, and their feelings rendered murderous by thought of the bullets which had hit too close for comfort as they clung precariously to the precipice, they commenced firing at the fugitive, in spite of the great distance, determined to hit him or the horse before the latter got under way in either direction. That tactical blunder cost them success.

Just as returning sense of balance steadied his wabbly legs, and the reappearance of the whites of his eyes bespoke renewed determination to throw his rider or bust, the air-slap of a bullet against the buckskin's sensitive nose shocked him back to full possession of his senses. Other bullets whined past, and spurts of dust flew up in time with the crack of pistol shots in the distance. In his fear of the shooting the big horse forgot all about bucking, and whirled away from the approaching men, who were firing as they ran. He broke into the road and raced eastward, carrying his rider out of pistol range, and later, out of sight.

IN THE mean time Swazey had ridden swiftly northward for several miles along the top of the cliff-line to another broken place in the ancient rampart. Riding cautiously down to the place where a perpendicular drop of ten or twelve feet separated him from the plain below, Swazey dismounted and maneuvered his horse out to the rim of the ledge.

Eagerness to capture the horse-thief blinded him to the fact that the chances were ninety-nine to one that a horse pushed over that ledge would land below with broken bones. Placing his strong shoulders carefully under the horse's belly, he suddenly straightened up with a mighty heave. Before he sensed what had happened, the startled animal was clawing frantically in mid-air, and next instant landed with a crash in the broken stones below.

Waiting in motionless expectancy for the result of his rash experiment, Swazey saw with relief that the horse miraculously rose on all four legs. Then the tall man swung

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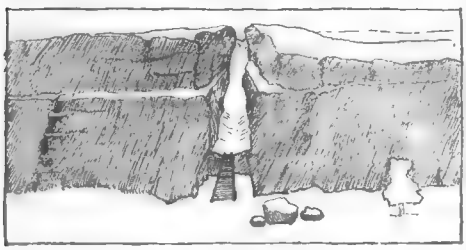
easily down after his horse and quickly remounted. Riding slowly and stumblingly clear of the fallen débris at the base of the cliff-line, Swazey swung eagerly southeastward and spurred into a gallop through the white clay hummocks crowned with stunted piñon-pines.

As his horse carried him swiftly toward his objective, a plan of ambush formed rapidly in Swazey's mind, based on his long experience with horses and horsemen.

From the place where Swazey left the cliff-line to the road was a distance of not over three or four miles, and the cowman covered it in about ten minutes. Pulling his horse up as he entered the road, he scanned it eagerly for fresh tracks. Reassurance smoothed the lines in his face as he made certain there were none.

Satisfied that the fugitive would come down this road if he escaped Acord at the trestle, Swazey dismounted and tied his lathering horse to a greasewood behind a



clay hump near the road. Securing his lariat from its place on the saddle, he ran along the road in the direction of the trestle, coming presently to the crossing of a dry wash with greasewood-lined banks.

In crossing this watercourse, the road followed along its hard bottom for a little distance to a place where a loop in the meandering wash provided an easy ascent to the farther bank. Here Swazey had decided to prepare an ambush. Selecting the narrowest place in this section of the wash, he concealed himself among the greasewood-bushes. At this point the wash was perhaps ten feet deep, its steep clay banks presenting no place of ascent from below.

An abrupt rise in the landscape near by cut off the view to the westward, so Swazey had to trust to his ears for warning of an approach from that direction. While he waited he recoiled his lariat to make sure there were no twists in its sinuous length, and then tied the end to a greasewood root.

Presently the muffled beat of hoofs pounding along a dusty trail came to his ears from over the rise. With quickened nerves he disposed the lariat in his hands for instant action. Then he removed his hat and peered through the leaves at the place where the white road passed over the skyline. In a moment a rider's head bobbed into view, and then the big buckskin appeared at the apex of a swirling line of dust, and dropped rapidly down toward the long crossing of the wash.

When the horseman entered the clay gully, Swazey's tense nerves were ready. He had already decided to appear and make his throw before the horse reached him, for in so doing the horse would be checked by the startling apparition before being jerked up by the rope. Another advantage of this plan, it would allow for pistol action at close range in case of failure with the rope. To remain hidden until the horse was passing would afford a surer throw, but if the horse were caught he would certainly be thrown hard, providing the rope and greasewood held, which was doubtful. Swazey dismissed the possibility of getting shot while his hands were employed with the rope, considering that for the moment the surprized desperado would be entirely occupied clinging to the horse.

But Swazey had figured all this out long before, and now waited like a panther ready to spring. Suddenly horse and rider galloped around a slight bend in the wash, and Swazey shot bolt upright, his outstretched right arm already whirling open the noose. Controlled by nerves and muscles so expert with long practise that there was no possibility of a miss, the rope whipped out and down, closing over the buckskin's neck before the animal realized what had jumped out at him.

The scared horse violently checked his momentum with a couple of short, stiff-legged jumps that threw his rider hard against his upraised neck, both arms clutching wildly around it to avoid being thrown over the animal's head. Swazey pulled up hard on the rope, swinging the lunging horse around toward

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him. Almost simultaneously his pistol was out.

Holding rope in one hand and gun in the other, Swazey watched in silence while the reeking buckskin brought himself to a quivering stop, and his rider pulled himself back into place.

"Hand me that gun, an' be mighty careful how yuh do it!" Swazey demanded quietly, in tones denoting calm assurance of keeping the initiative.

The youth complied without hesitation, being careful to grasp the weapon by its barrel as he tossed it gently to his captor.

Swazey noticed that the gun was empty, and smiled mirthlessly at the coincidence.

"Looks like you have quite a time tuh keep in ca'tridges," he observed grimly.

The blond youth neither spoke nor returned the searching glance. No disgusting grin conceding defeat twisted his features, nor did he look like a man who whimpers when beaten. Instead, a certain manly look of quiet readiness to take his medicine held his face immobile; yet there was no trace in it of the stupid, expressionless mask he had fooled the cowboys with. Swazey's glance of appraisal noted this, and he remembered the undercurrent of sympathy for the sheepherder in the rough talk of the men loafing in front of the store in Spring City.

Then the puncher's face set hard.

"Didja hit any o' them boys back there?" he asked softly.

Without looking up the captive answered with quiet self-control:

"I don't think so, unless I got the sheriff. I figgered I hit his horse."

Swazey's face relaxed.

"You figgered right, young feller."

Then Swazey noticed that the sun was approaching the cliff-line, and his mind suddenly filled with uneasiness. Characteristically reckless of consequences, he had pushed his horse over the ledge without thinking of his return. There was now no way of getting back to camp with the horses except by following the cliff-line southward many miles to Black Hawk's Gap, which meant a night ride over a trail almost impassable even in daylight.

Swazey dismissed the idea of leaving the horses at the cliff-line and taking his prisoner from there afoot, for the reason that he knew of no place where the barrier might be scaled without using both hands during some part of the ascent. Therefore, with the stoicism acquired in years of wilderness hardships, he banished uncomfortable anticipations of the long night-ride with a resourceful prisoner, and bent his attention on the task of figuring out how best to make it. He considered that his comrades, to whom he had imparted nothing of his hastily formed plans, would return to camp with the injured sheriff.

Some few geniuses in this world like to employ continually their faculties with arduous labors. But the majority of men turn with alacrity from the difficult tasks to interests less taxing to will or muscle. Swazey was no genius. In the midst of his unpleasant reflections his thoughts suddenly ceased revolving about the problem of getting home, and unconsciously responding to a secret approval of the youth's bearing, flew off on a tangent of irresponsible impulse.

"I kin easy see why you was packing a empty gun this time," he said almost boyishly. "But what I can't figger out is how you come to be outa ammynition when yuh pulled inta Simp's camp? The sheriff never mentioned no casualties."

Swazey's expression was one of whimsical curiosity as he eyed the youth questioningly.

The prisoner's countenance retained its sober cast, but his answer betrayed a response to the absence of hostility in his captor's manner.

"I only had one cartridge left when I got out of Spring City, an' I used that on my horse when I got 'im stuck in the snow crossing the mountains."

"What in —— didja do that fer?" rebuked Swazey. "The posse couldn't use 'im."

"That's why I shot 'im. I c'd see 'em coming, an' I knowed they wouldn't stop tuh git a horse outa the snow. So I killed 'im an' wallered through tuh the next ridge before they got clost enough tuh shoot good."

Swazey stood eying his captive keenly for a moment. Some heritage of Gaelic impulsiveness from an Irish ancestry was strongly stirred by the youth's manner and story. With a cowboy's inherent love and thoughtfulness for his horse, Swazey was greatly impressed by the thought of using the last cartridge, in the face of imminent capture, to prevent a hopelessly floundered horse from dying of slow torture in the snow.

As the big cowpuncher continued to question his prisoner, and to study the play of

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honest emotion on the downcast face, his mind was unconsciously veering around from its initial attitude of hostile watchfulness to an acceptance of the fugitive's viewpoint—the viewpoint of a spirit of the wilderness striving desperately to avoid being deprived of freedom; of one newly made an Ishmaelite by the blundering arm of the Law, seeking to escape the too severe consequences of a thoughtless moment.

"Where was yuh hittin' fer, kid?"

The note of sympathy was caught by the sheepherder.

"I was makin' fer the Henry Mountains," he answered quietly.

"Don't yuh do it, kid!" Swazey returned earnestly, entirely oblivious of the fact that his impulsive words represented surrender. "If yuh git in with Butch Cassidy's outfit, then your goose sure is cooked. Go the other way. When yuh git tuh the forks of the road—" he waved his pistol toward the East— "take the old Fremont trail to the north. They's plenty of cow an' sheep outfits in Uintah needin' help. You can start in respectable there."

Swazey paused for breath. He was talking with shameless eagerness.

"An' lemme tell yuh this, kid: From now on git sense. 'Sall right tuh git on the warpath occasionally, but it pays tuh figger on how the public is going tuh look at it."

There followed an awkward pause, during which the nervous horse pawed restlessly. Then the sheepherder looked up.

"Say, lemme—" he broke off as if checking himself from making a request his pride forbade, and looked sullenly at the horse's withers.

"Sure!" Swazey heartily granted the unspoken request. "I'll let yuh take 'im fer three-four months. Then you bring 'im back or send me a hundred dollars."

Swazey paid out enough rope to slacken it.

"Slip that lasso off," he ordered.

The blond youth patted the buckskin softly and reassuringly on the side of the neck, gradually advancing the caresses up to the rope. Then he very gently and carefully loosened Swazey's noose until he was able to erect a loop over the horse's ears. Letting the loop fall outward, he gripped hard with his legs as the horse lunged away from the falling rope.

Anxious to get out of that fearsome wash and the confinement of its high banks, the horse needed no urging to break into a run. Once started, it was easy to keep him galloping eastward when he emerged from the wash.

His rider never looked back.

Swazey watched with folded arms until the big buckskin disappeared among the clay humps, and then, excitement passed, he turned wearily back to his horse. When he had mounted he rode on to the top of a tiny knoll and turned his eyes eastward.

Already in the distance a tiny dust cloud was nearing the place where the road forked—one white, ribbon-like branch turning southeastward toward the Colorado River, where the peaks of the Henry Mountains marred the sky-line in the hazy distance, and the other turning abruptly northward to the crossing of the Cottonwood.

Then the dust speck arrived at the parting of the ways and turned unhesitatingly northward.

THE dusk of evening began to settle over Forever's desert. Riding thoughtfully along the homeward trail, Swazey reined in his horse, and with hands resting on the horn, sat gazing into nowhere. He mused aloud—

"Where'd I hear that saying, 'A touch of Nature makes the whole world brothers?' "

Presently the big fellow pulled himself together.

"See here, cayuse, we're gittin' sick!"

His spurs hit the horse's sides with a bang.

"Whoop!" he yelled.

Out whipped the big revolver and three shots in quick succession awoke the echoes along the cliff-line, each shot followed by a spat as a boulder got what was coming to it. For a mile the "Wild Irishman" rode like Tam O' Shanter. Then slowing up he patted the reeking horse and apologized—

"Jist to find where we're at, old son."

When Swazey arrived at the camp on Ferron Creek, the first paling light of dawn was showing in the east. As he was about to lead his tired horse into the semi-darkness of the stable, a huge, blanketed form crowned with lank, black hair uprose on elbow from a pile of hay within, and in the husky voice of sleep, demanded—

"Didja git 'im?"

"Nope," Swazey lied. "He got away, sheriff."

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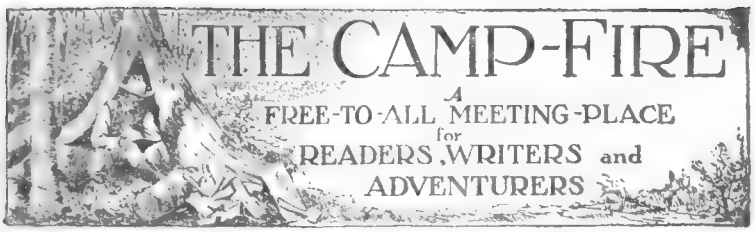

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

SOMETHING from W. C. Tuttle about Indian legends and the setting of his novelette in this issue:

Hollywood, Calif.

I have used a location in the Sierra Madre mountains and an actual superstition in this tale. There is a place up there, known as Jennie Ellen lake and above it is the Wind caves, much as I have described it.

NO, I have never investigated them, but I hope to some day. According to an old legend, which is sworn to as truth by the Indians, it is impossible to pass between the caves and the lake. There is a trail, or the beginning of a trail, which is said to bear evidences of travel, although no one knows who used it.

The Indians claim that to use this trail is to incur the wrath of the wind gods, which will blow hard enought to hurl anyone into the lake, which is just below the cave entrance. This lake is said to be bottomless, as green as jade and with sheer rocky sides. The cañon is a *cul de sac*, with towering cliffs.

The rest of the tale, with a few exceptions, is just fiction.—TUT.

HERE'S a letter—and a San Francisco newspaper clipping enclosed with it. Maybe comrades who were with the 30th Infantry at the Marne can tell us something more—though ninety-two wounds would seem about enough for one man. If the doctor who said he couldn't live long is among us, will he speak up?

Westward, California.

My hopes, brothers of the Camp-Fire, are that you will pardon my butting in.

FOR several years I have decorated, ducked, dodged, to try to get where a little flicker of flame from our beloved Camp-Fire lit up the background. Now I step forward boldly into its light to meet my brothers. I am of a doubtful age; in '98 I lied to get into the service, but strange to say, I also did in '17. The fact is I did several short hitches. What branch? Army, Marines, Navy. Finally I was able to make an outfit which did its bit. In days past I took a rap at sailoring. What kind of a craft? Anything from a scow to a full rigger. Ranger, Forestry Service, sheep-herder,

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cow outfit, lumber-jacking, policeman, river driver, miner and what not. God bless them all, for among them you meet some real he-men.

For years I have searched for a real adventure, something out of the ordinary. I am still searching. I was discharged from a school of Vocational Training in the Spring with the advice: "Settle down, young man, and make a bit of money. You haven't long for this world. I'll bet you haven't the price of your funeral expenses." This from a doctor. Say, among my friends, they couldn't find a man to take him up and any one of them are good sports and at most times ready to take a chance. Say, buddies of the open, who of us care for money for a little thing like funeral expenses?

NOW, here where I am it's different. With liquor at six bits a throw, beds at two silver eagles a throw and grub at a buck a plate—say, Jesse James would look like a piker in this burg, but oh boy, real men! Bill the Doger, Frisco Mike Gordon, Uncle Bill Parson, Square Deal Granby and a few more. And again the taming hand of civilization still has yet to touch this spot. A primitive region of ragged tops, which seem grim, foreboding and defiant with a majestic silence enwrapping it all. The boys are far enough away so I can't even hear the clip of axes and the sign of a cross-cut; the only noise is the —— crumb-boss, the Arizona wampus cat, as he is called. Yes, I am back in the hills, partly buried in its first fall of snow. Camp Seven, Red River Lumber Company.

How come, when the doctor said I only had a short time to live? But that was last Spring. Seventy-three inches of nothing, topping the scales at 134, I shouldered my pack and hit the high spots on crutches. Hiked 4600 miles this Summer and outside every moment. I now weigh 183 and still going. Did 48 miles yesterday with 62-pound pack.

Hiked with the champ of Presidio on a climb of Mt. Tamalpais and when he decided to dust me, hiked into camp (56 miles incidentally) and had supper cooked waiting for him when he got there. In a few days I will have her made (my grub-stake) and will mosey on—where? Oh, just on, and friends as we meet, Rambler Bell is my moniker and, as you gather, don't forget there is one more in your midst and getting more heat from close up than he was out where the shadows used to flicker. Yours for a lifetime.—RAYMOND E. BELL.

AND the newspaper clipping:

"Human Sieve" of Yanks Here

Sergeant Raymond E. Bell, wounded more times than any other American soldier in the World War, breezed into San Francisco yesterday on his hike around the world.

The sergeant is 198 days out of Rockland, Me., without a mishap thus far. He is headed north on his way to the Orient via Seattle, Victoria, B. C., Alaska and way points.

Bell is known as the "human sieve" of the American Expedition Forces.

In the battle of the Marne on June, 1918, he received:

Eighty-two shrapnel wounds.
Eight machine-gun bullet wounds.
And two bayonet thrusts.

He went into the army base hospital, underwent seventeen operations, and when he came out months afterwards he had:

Ninety-two wound scars.
Three toes missing from his right foot.
A silver nose bridge.
A silver knee cap.
And a silver hip joint swivel.

Two pounds of lead and steel shrapnel were taken out of his body at the hospital.

Substituting for his first lieutenant, who was shot down, Bell was leading the third platoon of Thirtieth Infantry in action when wounded.

For his bravery under fire the French government awarded him the Croix de Guerre and the medal of the Marne.

Yesterday upon his arrival he visited the quartermaster corps headquarters at the Presidio here. There, on exhibition, he saw the twisted bayonet found thrust through him when he was picked up on the battlefield.

Since leaving Rockland, Me., nearly seven months ago, Sergeant Bell has traveled 4,660 miles on his globe-trotting venture.

He left last night for Westwood, Calif. He will rest there a few days before striking out for Seattle.

BOXING *vs* ju-jutsu always seems an interesting question:

Brooklyn, New York.

A Pittsburgh inquirer. He wants to know the probable outcome of a bout between a champion boxer and an expert ju-jutsuist and whether such a scrap has ever been staged.

Well, I remember, about seventeen years ago, when I was a kid I saw a picture in a *Police Gazette* of a fight of that sort aboard one of the battle-ships of the United States Navy. I don't remember who the battlers were or how long the fight lasted. I do know, however, that the ju-jutsuist extended his unconditional surrender to the boxer.

I believe, though, that it would hardly be fair to draw a definite conclusion from this incident. It's a case of "he who hesitates is lost." Of course the ju-jutsuist might be knocked cukoo before he had a chance to get his fancy work in, or the boxer might be twisted up like a cruller before he was fairly started. On the whole, I think a lightweight boxer would stand very well against a ju-jutsu artist while the average heavyweight's name would be mud.

I'm not an expert on either subject but I know something of both.—RALPH FOSSUM.

THERE is always a substantial historical background for Hugh Pendexter's novels of American pioneer days. Here is a letter telling the sources of the actual happenings woven into "Red Autumn," the serial beginning in this issue:

Norway, Maine.

The Missouri Fur Company is the oldest of the three principal companies to trade west of the Mississippi. It was near dissolution when the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and the American Fur Company secured a footing in St. Louis. The biography of Manuel Lisa, the first great trader to ascend the Missouri, is the history of the Missouri

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Fur Company, to such an extent was he prominent in the direction of its affairs.

HE WAS born in New Orleans, Sept. 8, 1772, his father coming to this country when the Spanish took over Louisiana. Lisa went to St. Louis about 1790 and almost at once entered the fur trade. In 1800, or when twenty-eight years old, he enjoyed exclusive trade privileges with the Osage Indians, ousting Pierre Chouteau, who had held the privilege under the Spanish government for twenty years. His trips up the Missouri are listed, the most of them, in *Red Autumn*. Those who would make a detailed study of this remarkable man should read Chittenden's "The History of the American Fur Trade of the Far West;" Luttig's "Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition on the Upper Missouri in 1812-13," edited by Stella M. Drumm, and published by the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. Brackenridge's Journal, 1811, vol. 6, of "Early Western Travels." This was the trip when Lisa went to bring Henry out of the country and broke travel records in overtaking Hunt, who had charge of the Astorians. Bradbury's Journal, vol. 5, of the same series, 1811, the English botanist, who was with the Hunt party: Gen. Thomas James', "Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans." James was with Lisa on the 1809 trip and slams the trader terrifically throughout his journal. The book was suppressed for some years because of the writer's bitter bias. Not only Lisa, but the Chouteaus, Labbadie, and others connected with the company are most rigorously assailed.

DURING the War of 1812 Lisa was the only active trader on the river, and the company was usually spoken of as "Manuel Lisa and Company." He was made subagent for all Missouri tribes above the Kansas River and ascended the river in August, 1814. Chittenden in part says, "He succeeded beyond all expectations in controlling the Indians." He not only stopped the intertribal wars, but sent big war expeditions against the upper Mississippi tribes which were allied to the British.

My story takes him into the Winter of 1813. He brought that trade down to St. Louis in June of that year. Lisa married twice among his own people and also took a wife among the Omahas. The children of his white wives died without issue; whether the children of his Omaha wife continued the blood I do not know. Lisa's last trip down the river was in the Spring of 1820 when he returned to St. Louis. He was taken ill on August first and died on the 12th of that month, the nature of his disease never having been established. With Lisa dead the Missouri Fur Company ended its activities within a few years.

AMONG the fiction liberties I have taken in the story is the presence of Tenskwatawa among the Minnetarees. I do not know that he visited the Missouri tribes, although I have no doubt that the influence of the English traders was supplemented by emissaries sent by Tecumseh. The fur trade was too young for the bourgeois to wear a uniform, although this was done later, Kenneth McKenzie, most prominent as a "King of the Missouri,"thus attiring himself at one time.

Bradbury saw and talked with Daniel Boone at Charette in 1811. All the early travelers as a rule note in their journals the custom of shaving all members of an outfit who are passing the mouth of the Platte for the first time. The references to the career of Blackbird, chief of the Omahas, are based on statements made by Bradbury, Brackenridge, and others.

The route taken by my hero and the hunter, from the post above the Arikara villages to the Mandan villages, is the same as followed by Bradbury in 1811. Hodge's "Handbook of the American Indians" ascribes Shahaka's death to Sioux. I have followed that in my story, although Luttig says he was killed by Minnetarees. Lisa received word of Shahaka's and Little Crow's deaths on Oct. 3 at Fort Manuel. Hidatsa was the name of the principal Minnetaree village. Hodge says it probably came to be used as the tribe name after smallpox epidemic in 1837.

An interesting and authoritative work on this tribe is Washington Matthews' Ethnography and Philology of the Hidatsa Indians, vol. 7 of "Miscellaneous publications," pub. 1877, Dept. of the Interior.

I HAVE remarked in the story on the strong similarity of Tenskwatawa's talk and Pontiac's. In one of the early journals I read preliminary to writing the story mention was made of an Indian medicine man who carried a tame crow with him. I have utilized the incident.

The House of the Infants was one of two sacred places famous among the Minnetarees. The other was the "Medicine Rock," described by Long and Maximilian, some two or three days journey from the village. When Matthews was at Hidatsa the Indians seldom spoke of it, and, he says, did not visit it. Matthews has an excellent account of eagle hunting, eagle-lodges, and eagle-traps in his book. He says he saw several men who had a hand permanently crippled by a captive eagle's talons. On November 30th Lisa received word by Arikara hunters that Antoine Mercier, Jean Batiste Lachappelle, and Eustache Carriere had been killed above the Big Bend.

ONE character I intended to introduce into the story and found it awkward to include was Sacagawea, the Shoshoni wife of Toussaint Charbonneau, a French Candian *voyageur* living among the Hidatsa. She served as guide and interpreter for the Lewis and Clark expedition. She was captured by the Hidatsa—Minnetarees—and sold to Charbonneau when she was fourteen years old. Her husband overturned the boat containing the expedition's records and it was Sacagawea who plunged in and rescued them. Monuments and brass tablets have been erected in honor of the "Bird Woman" who served the early explorers so ably, but as to the date of her death there seems to be much confusion, Luttig in his journal under date of December 20th, 1812, writes:

"Clear and moderate, our hunter says Rees went out and Killed 20 Cows head and foot was received this Evening, purchased a fine Dog of the Chajennes, this Evening the Wife of Charbonneau a Snake Squaw, died of putrid feaver she was good and the best woman in the fort, aged abt 25 years she left a fine infant girl."

Up to the discovery of Luttig's Journal nothing definite was known about the Bird Woman's life after 1811. Stella M. Drumm, editor of the Journal,

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positively identified the "Snake wife of Charbonneau" as Sacagawea of "Lewis and Clark" fame. "Hodge's "Handbook" has her dying "near Ft. Washakie, Apr. 9, 1884, almost a hundred years of age. Her grave is marked by a brass tablet." Ft. Washakie was on the Wind River reservation, Montana. Another authority—Hosemer—quotes an old interpreter at Fort Berthold to the effect she and her husband died in the 1837 smallpox epidemic so disastrous to the Mandan nation. Among the monuments erect is one in Wyoming, claimed to mark the Bird Woman's grave. Much of this confusion doubtless arose from Charbonneau's having two or more Indian wives. All travelers who kept journals usually mentioned seeing or hearing of "old Charbonneau" up to 1839, but none mention his Shoshoni wife. I believe Luttig's brief eulogy—"she was good and the best woman in the fort"—had reference to the Sacagawea, who served as interpreter and guide for Lewis and Clark, and who saved the all important records from being destroyed when her husband's mismanagement upset the boat on the Missouri. Washington Matthews, an authority on the Hidatsa tribe, spells the name "Sakakawea."—HUGH PENDEXTER.

FAIR warning. The following is an interesting and stimulating letter but if anybody thinks he sees in it a chance to start an argument on religion at Camp-Fire he's doomed to disappointment. Also, somebody'll probably say it's propaganda. If so, I want to say in advance that I don't know what it's propaganda for. Some of it's too deep for me, but even that part looks harmless enough. Except as it may contain new ideas on something. Certain types of people always consider any new idea on anything a very, very wicked thing indeed. Me, I like 'em. Just because they're new. A new idea may be a mistaken one, but at least it stirs up our minds and makes 'em consider things from a fresh viewpoint. And the minds of most of us sure need that stirring up.

As to the Ark of the Covenant, those prophecies, the pyramids, etc., I think I've told you we have some body-blows against Talbot Mundy's theories waiting for space at Camp-Fire

Detroit, Michigan.

Not the first letter I have written to Camp-Fire, but not all letters written see the mailbox. Perhaps I have something to add to the fund of information that comes to us all tri-monthly.

THE "drunken sailor" dates back of Bill Adams by some centuries, and is older than "as drunk as a lord." Dates back to the time when "grog" was allowed three times a day and came almost as regularly as salt meat. It ante-dates steam vessels, and belongs now, to the unpersonal things like adages and proverbs. Sailors, of that sort, went out with the centuries to which they belonged. It is as foolish to take exceptions to such a comparison as it is to row about the Proverbs of Solomon. No "lords" seem to be wounded, in this fray, and one has to suspect a very strong *personal* sense, and probably a guilty sense, back of the objection.

About whether the Ark of the Covenant would kill any one who touched it in this day—it would depend upon conditions and environment. If it were introduced into Kaffir Kraals, with a Witch-Doctor to tell the penalty, that would happen. If it were introduced into such a company as ours here, no, it would not, unless in exceptional cases of superstitious fear complicated by disease, or something of that nature. There is nothing in the thing in itself to produce any result, any more than there was in the corn eaten by the Kaffir boy, whose teeth fell out after eating it. Nor was that effect produced by the woman who bewitched him; nor by the boy. It was due to the mental effect produced in him by the atmosphere in which they lived, which had been with them through many generations, so that the ideas producing such results were fundamental in the whole tribe. All people are the results, and the victims, of their own ideas. Their ideas produce their conditions, their environment, and their *atmosphere* is the first cause of all. Atmosphere is not air. We know it best as electricity, waves, etc., but all inclusively it is Atmosphere, i. e., the sum of all thoughts.

IT IS the source of the mesmerism of the fakirs in India. It is all mass mesmerism. It is the cause of the decadence of the beach-comber, and of the white men who are long isolated among ignorant people. On the contrary, the lack of atmosphere explains the hardiness, individuality and general efficiency of the mountaineer, the "sour-dough" and the prospecter, and those who seek the far places of the cold countries with isolation.

Why the mesmerism? It is the lack of resistance, mental resistance, in those who are mesmerized. White races rule because they are controlled by their conscious thought or will-power. Others are ruled because their mentality is passive in its nature and necessarily so in its action. They receive what is told them without question and are dominated by the active intelligence working on them. It is the same thing in the action of mobs and panics, only varying in kind and degree. It is the same in pestilence. It is the cause of everything that happens to us, and we shall presently know all about it—those of us who have open minds.

EVERYTHING depends upon the open mind, in that matter. Everything depends upon environment in everything else. Santie Sabalala is a conspicuous example of what a change of environment will do. We are all friends here and he will not mind being an example in point. Education helps greatly, but that it is less than atmosphere is shown by the results of education of those Indians who were educated by the Government and returned to their tribes and expected to be shining examples of the white man's wisdom. Most of them very shortly reverted to the tribal conditions, until the tribes were themselves taken in hand. Then new ideas began to produce a new atmosphere about them.

It is hardly possible to give more than a hint about it, in a letter to Camp-Fire, but a hint is all

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that any one can use. The working out of the idea, and its application must be done by each, alone. But the hint may be useful to those who travel to far places. It is hard to introduce new ideas as mere teaching. It has to be done through the atmosphere, and the emotions of isolated tribes, and those who travel among them should remember that "the white man's burden" involves doing the little that is possible to do—whatever it is possible to teach, in any case.

I HAVE adventured with all of you for a long time and enjoyed every bit of the way. Camp-Fire is a living encyclopedia, and the most instructive one I know. It is so vivid and vital. What difference whether we travel into the mountains, or through the Red Sea with Moses, or up the Javary with Friel? Whether we know the Egyptians with Pharaoh, or the Arabs with Mundy? The tribes of the Israelites were not farther removed from us than are the tribes of the Amazon. It is not time that counts, but education and atmosphere. The Millennium may exist for me, and the Dark Ages for my neighbor, and the centuries sweep us all along as details of the same life. Sometimes it seems not worth living for the individual, but for the mass it is the greatest "movie" ever staged, and nowhere is it so illustrated as in Camp-Fire.

BUT as Talbot Mundy has introduced the Israelites and their march through the centuries, and it has excited the interest of the crowd, I would suggest that those who are interested look up the works of Lieut. Charles A. L. Totten, an American who died a dozen years ago and left behind a world of information on the subject. Mr. Mundy sent me to the library, myself. Totten's book on the Millennium gives a picture of what is with us to-day that is staggering, and he only offers it as an interpretation of prophecy as he understood it. He seemed to be discredited by events, but I do not think he was wrong. "A live pigmy sees more on a dead giant's shoulders than the live giant's eyesight availed to explore." Where he seemed to err was in his thoroughly orthodox belief that Jesus would reappear at that time (that is how I understand him) and that the Millennium would be a universal condition. I gave my own opinion when I said that it might exist for me, but not for my next door neighbor. Good and evil travel side by side, as they always have, and as they will to the end of time. But for those who are interested in the great adventure of life as it is in the Race, I recommend Totten's books beginning with "Our Race." In that book you will find all that Mr. Mundy says about the Israelites, and in the series of eight a great deal more, taken consecutively. I have no doubt that Mr. Mundy, and Mr. Test, are a great deal better posted on what others have said on the subject than I am, but I think I know some things that are not in print—yet. No one can see and know everything. We all have our bit to do in the whole, *every one of us*, and the whole is the sum of all the parts. Every adventurer is doing his bit in the great adventure.

I HAVE read both the fakir incidents given by Eugene Cunningham, and true, or untrue, the Englishman would not be mesmerized, because he was intent on taking his pictures and not on what the fakir was doing. The others saw all that they were meant to see, because they were passive, and more because they believed the fakir could do the thing. They were largely self-mesmerized. I am sure that I might have seen just what they saw, at one time. People who think much on these subjects and say little are very easily affected, but specially ignorant people. Miracles are phenomena worked under laws we do not yet understand—but we will as the Millennium develops.

I think I will add some items about which I wrote letters, and then threw them into the waste-basket. Mr. Harris (who is a faraway relative of mine, being a Conn. Harris), may cut it all out.

About The Cave of Machpelah, of which Mr. Mundy once wrote, and its non-Moslem visitors, Mr. Morgenthau once went there with a party of twenty-six, including ladies. As Mr. Mundy says he was the eighteenth, probably the ladies were not counted, nor supposed to be present. All were permitted to look into the tombs of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but no men were allowed to look into the tombs of Sarah, Rebecca and Leah. The harem idea ante-dated the harem, apparently, and the seclusion was made retroactive.—ANNA BROCKWAY GRAY, M. D.

ONE of our comrades who's been trotting around quite a little and apparently his feet still itch for more:

Portovelo, Ecuador.

I left New York on Aug. nineteenth for Maracaibo, Venezula. From there another engineer for the Tropical Oil Co. and myself went on an exploration trip throughout the Guawahara Indian country back of Santa Marta, Colombia, a tribe absolutely wild. They would not let us collect specimens of rock or use surveying instruments. Neelands (the geologist who was with me) was shot at three times; mule he was riding was hit and fore leg broken; we had to kill it. We came out at Barranquilla the early part of October and I went up the Magdalena River on a pipe survey from Barranca Bemija (486 miles from the coast) to Cartagena, finished just before Christmas. I thought I had been through some bad country in Central America, but it was not a circumstance to this. Worked in water up to my waist day after day, and mosquitoes! I am not exaggerating when I say several thousand bit me each day, notwithstanding the fact I had an instrument bearer with a brush to keep them off.

Was back in Barranquilla for Christmas, left on January sixth for Panama and Ecuador, arrived in Guayaquil January seventeenth and am now doing exploration work on the line of Peru and Ecuador near Pieta. I have been miles back over some pretty rough country in this past two months, one trip of 23 days in the Orienta back of Quito and all down a little creek near Tumbez, Peru, that went through the roughest mountain country I was ever in and I have worked all over British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, California, Utah and Colorado.

Am leaving in a few days for the south end of Peru and Bolivia. My contract with this company expires the first of August and I think I shall run down in Chile and over to Brazil for this Winter and back in New York in May, '23. Of course things may turn up to change my plans, but this is what I am thinking of doing now.—CAPT. W. B. BUCKNER.

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SOMETHING about bad-men of the old West, from Glynn Bennion, in connection with his story in this issue. Also something about the old Colt cap-and-ball six-shooter. Incidentally, there will be an article in the next issue of the magazine about Butch Cassidy, whom Mr. Bennion mentions as being great, written by Frederick R. Bechdolt, whom he also considers great, but for a different reason.

Vernon, Tooele County, Utah.

Ranching isn't like a hot potato; you can't drop it when you want to. But at last I've found time to finish another story. Hope you'll like it.

IF I had any motive other than to tell a yarn about the people and things I know, it was to portray the fact that many of the western outlaws were not criminally depraved from the beginning, but became enemies of the law through some such chain of circumstances as I have related. Mr. Bechdolt has told how the force of circumstances reduced citizens in good standing to the status of outlaws.

By the way, I like his articles something wonderful. I'm too far north to be acquainted with the people he writes about, but I've lately met up with old-timers who helped make that history, and according to them Mr. Bechdolt has it about right.

Last year I met with a sheep-herder, from Meteetse, Wyoming, who claimed to have herded sheep with Hugh Whitney, the bandit who terrorized parts of Idaho and Wyoming several years ago. In my introduction I have followed his version of the incidents which made an outlaw of Whitney.

"Butch" Cassidy himself, in my estimation the greatest of all western outlaws, became an outlaw because of a real injustice done him by the town constable when he was a boy. And his highly efficient gang of bandits which successfully raided herds, banks and trains for many years all over eastern Utah, western Colorado and southern Idaho and Wyoming before it was at last broken up, was largely recruited from reckless young fellows who fell afoul of the law in a manner similar to that described in my story.

AS A matter of fact, several years after the occurrence of the incidents I've related, one of my characters, *Acord*, went over to Butch Cassidy's gang as a result of a thoughtless cowboy prank. One day, just to liven things up a bit, he drew a bandanna over his eyes and held up the Huntington stage. Cleverly acting the part of a real bandit, he slit open the mail sacks and took out the registered mail. Taking another trail into Huntington, he clapped spurs to his horse and beat the stage to the town. He rode directly to the post-office and delivered all the stuff he had taken. But the unhumorous officials couldn't take the joke, and sent him to Fort Leavenworth for a long term. When he got out of prison he went straight to Butch Cassidy, who by that time had moved northward from the Henry Mountains to his famous Hole-in-the-wall stronghold in the Flaming Gorge. *Acord* became one of Cassidy's best men.

How about Butch Cassidy? Has he been exploited in fiction?

I AM greatly tempted to write you a lot of things about Butch Cassidy, about the incidents of my story, and about my father's life as a puncher in Castle Valley—he was one of the cowboys assembled at Ferron Creek.

Although the plot is largely fiction, the stunts described are all real happenings. Jumping off a barpost on to a wild horse was Sid Swazey's own pet trick. I have myself been bucked until I bled at the nose and ears.—GLYNN BENNION.

When we asked Mr. Bennion whether revolvers using cartridges had not superseded the old cap-and-ball weapon at the time of his story, he wrote to M. S. Browning, manager of Browning Bros. Sporting Arms Company, at Ogden, Utah, and then did some investigating on his own. First comes the letter from the sporting goods people.

Ogden, Utah.

DEAR MR. BENNION:

Your letter of the seventh is at hand and in reply would say that the Colt and Smith & Wesson people were making only pistols for cartridges in 1880, and for several years previous to that time, although at that time there were a great many cap and ball pistols in use. You are perfectly right in saying they used cartridges and reloading outfits, the latter being used by nearly every one outside the cities. The .45 Colt cartridge pistol was made in '73.

Yours very truly,
M. S. BROWNING.

AND here is what Mr. Bennion found:

Vernon, Utah.

WHEN I got your letter I rode to my father's ranch on Vernon Creek and asked him about guns used in Castle Valley when he was there, 1875 to 1878. He says they used the old Colt's cap-and-ball six-shooter which had to be cocked with the thumb. Caps and bullets were carried in a pocket, powder in a horn slung under the arm. A man usually carried two pistols in order to have twelve shots before reloading. To reload, muzzle was turned upward, proper charge of powder was poured into each chamber of the cylinder, paper wads were tamped on top of powder, and then bullets were pushed in on top of the wads. A tiny ram-rod with lever attachment, carried under the barrel, pressed the ball tightly in place. Then a percussion cap was pressed into the tiny cup in the rear end of each chamber. A pinhole connected the cap with the powder charge.

About the time of my story, however, revolvers were made which fired cartridges. For about twenty years thereafter the shells were made of such good material that it was a common practise, especially out in the wilds, to reload the used shells. I remember, in the latter 90's, when I was a very small boy, seeing the men molding bullets and reloading empty shells. One man got some fingers blown off by carelessly pressing the cap into place after he had loaded the shell with powder and ball. All the old-timers I've been able to question tell me they are sure men were reloading shells as early

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as 1880, but none could remember specific instances much before 1890. It was this practise of reloading empty shells that I had in mind when writing "A Touch of Irish." Such reloaded shells were commonly called "bullets." Either type of weapon could be fired very fast.

I THINK it perfectly safe to place the date at 1880, or even 1885. Then the shooting would surely be technically correct. It wouldn't do to give the story a later date than 1885, for the reason that Mr. Bechdolt, in "The Last of The Open Ranges," states that the Swasey ranch in Castle Valley was used as one of Butch Cassidy's holdouts. My father doesn't believe this, but I do. I've been told by residents of Castle Valley that in later years one or more of the Swasey boys had considerable truck with Cassidy and his men. In fact, many of the best cowboys father was acquainted with went over to the famous outlaw. Cassidy's exploits took hold of men's imaginations as Robin Hood's did long before.

SWASEY was well over six feet; strong as a bull, active as a panther. Of the black-haired, blue-eyed strain of Irish. Hair as black and coarse as a horse's tail. Happy-go-lucky dare-devil. Never quarrelsome, but tickled to death if a scrap came his way. Best horseman in the world. Father fairly idolized him. Father was only fifteen years old then, but he was manager of an outfit running two thousand head of cattle in there. At that time, and for a number of years later, Swasey's attitude toward Butch Cassidy was certainly as I've stated it in the story.

By the way, Bechdolt's spelling of the name is correct. The name is Swasey, not Swazey. I used z instead of s for fear readers wouldn't give the s the hard sound.—GLYNN BENNION.

ARE you going to let them get away with it again? Going to go right on being the goat?

Another coal strike is planned for this year. Still another time the operators and miners will force the people of the entire United States to go short of coal and freeze in Winter. So that these operators or miners or both can get some more money for themselves. You will shiver in your homes and some of you will die from the effects—so that *you* can furnish them with this money. Them and the railroads and other middlemen.

And this is a democracy in which the welfare of the majority is supposed to be more important than that of the minority.

I'm advocating no particular remedy and pleading no cause except that of the people as a whole. As between miners and operators the miners undoubtedly need and deserve more money more than the operators do. The miners at least go through the form of showing some interest in behalf of the general public; the operators don't give a ——. Neither group is working primarily for anything except what it can get out of it for itself. It is probable that they are secretly working together to bilk the people out of more money, each recognizing the fact that, at no cost to itself, it can not only get more money for itself but satisfy and calm down the other by getting more money for the other too. And *we* are to furnish that money.

Miners and operators together are a small minority of the people, yet they are allowed not only to prey upon the majority but to cause the majority acute physical suffering by holding back the supply of a general necessity. To that extent I do advocate a remedy—the only common-sense remedy possible. A country, rich in coal and in the means of mining and transporting it, that allows a small minority to deprive the majority of the fuel necessary to sustain life, or even to shorten the supply, for the profit of that minority is not civilized in any intelligent meaning of that word. It can't claim anything better than a very crude and benighted kind of government until it takes control of this national necessity out of the hands of the minority who have proved selfish hogs and makes some new arrangement whereby the people as a whole can exercise, directly or indirectly, control of that common necessity.

There are various ways of doing it and I plead for no particular one of them. Except that, if the mines are to be controlled by the people or their government, the wages fixed for the miners who actually dig the coal should be fully commensurate with the difficulty, dangers and disadvantages entailed but no whit more and that the price paid the operators for their holdings should yield them a return *of* their capital rather than a return *on* their capital. They've had enough profit already. They've also proved themselves enemies of the American people and should be punished rather than rewarded.

Are you going to have coal to keep your family warm and to run your business and public services or are you going to continue to be a goat, a sheep and an ass?—A. S. H.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader

In the last issue of each month are printed in full the friendly services of *Adventure* to readers: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons; Camp-Fire Stations, etc.

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Ask Adventure

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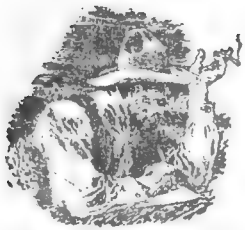

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

1, 2. The Sea. In Two Parts
3, 4. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
5, 6. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
7. Australia and Tasmania
8. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
9. New Guinea
10. Philippine Islands
11. Hawaiian Islands and China
12. Japan
13, 14. Asia. In Two Parts
15. Coast of Northeast Siberia and Adjoining Waters
16—23. Africa. In Eight Parts
24. Turkey and Asia Minor
25, 26. Balkans. In Two Parts
27. Scandinavia
28. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
29, 30. South America. In Two Parts
31. Central America
32, 33. Mexico. In Two Parts.
34—40. Canada. In Seven Parts
41. Alaska
42. Baffinland and Greenland
43—47. Western U. S. In Five Parts
48—51. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
52—55. Eastern U. S. In Four Parts
Tropical Forestry
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Fishing in North America
Standing Information
Lost Trails

Working Conditions in India

NOTHING doing unless you have money or a job contracted for over here:

Question:—"You might send me information about India.

I would like to settle in India for two years. How are working conditions there? And is there very much fever there, and the best way to get there?

Is there any American men that have business there? If so, send me their addresses. I wrote you before and forgot to inclose stamp."—Jos. W. Howard, Whitefish, Mont.

Answer, by Capt. Giddings:—I have recently received a letter from a brother flying officer stationed in India, in which he states that conditions are not

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at all favorable to the foreign-born working man at this time.

He advises strongly against encouraging the man without some considerable capital to go to India, and personally I am of his opinion.

My advice to you is—unless you have some money, a roving disposition, and a desire for adventure—keep away from India at this time. There is no money there for you.

I hate to discourage you—but my information is recent and comes from a reliable source.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Greenland

WHO would believe that this frozen jumping-off place was chock-full of game?

Question:—"Will you do me the favor of answering the following questions concerning Greenland?

1. What parts of Greenland would you consider being absolutely unexplored?

2. What are the opportunities for hunting for one not especially used to arctic methods? Bear and bird for instance.

3. What is the geological nature of the country?

4. Will you give me an idea of the customs, personal habits, origin and language of the native Eskimo? Is it your opinion that they are of Monogolian origin as has been claimed?

5. What is the native religion if they have any? I mean their beliefs before becoming converted.

6. Of what does the flora and fauna of the country consist outside of the animals we generally connect with frozen oceans such as polar bear, walrus and whale, etc.?

We have quite an interesting territory here, even though it is in the ancient and prosaic East; and if I can be of any use to you in a like manner I will be glad to do what I can."—HAROLD D. GIBBS, Sagamore, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—It is a pleasure to answer letters such as yours, and if I followed my inclination I should answer *fully*. I regret that I can not spare the time. I could fill a 300-page book with nothing more than your questions for theme.

1. Practically none except for certain bays, or scattered unimportant portions.

Interior entirely covered with an "ice-cap," which domes centrally to about 3,000 feet altitude above sea-level. The continent is fringed, however, by mountain ranges 1,000-2,000 feet in altitude, these keeping the ice back like a gigantic dam, and permitting a strip of ice-free land, of varying width, between them and the sea. The weight of this enormous mass of inland ice forces it out between the mountain-peaks (called "*noo-nah-taks*," Esk.,) forming glaciers.

Much of this ice-cap has never felt man's foot, nor in fact ever been seen. Nansen made one trip across, from coast to coast. So did Peary (his initial sledge-work)using Godhavn, Disco Is., as his base.

Peary made one 1,500-mile sledge-trip from Murchison Sound across the northern section, explored the north coast, named Independence Bay (Peary Land) and thus determined the insularity of Greenland.

Various Scandinavian expeditions have quite thoroughly explored the eastern coast, connecting Peary's work on the north shores; and Greely's expedition of '84 covered most of Smith's Sound and adjacent coast to the Arctic Ocean. Lockwood and Brainard's work under Greely took in the northwestern coast nearly to connect with Peary's later work on this side.

There are a few small sections which have not been closely examined. One is the portion lying south of Melville Bay, near the Devil's Thumb, and extending south nearly to Upernavik. Value, chiefly for a geologist, or a glaciologist.

2. All this country is a hunter's paradise! You have heard, or read, about bear, walrus and whale, but north of Melville Bay there are herds of caribou (barren-ground variety). I have taken males whose horns scaled 48 inches from burr to tip and having 20-30 points, with double palms extending clear to the nose.

Also, bunches of musk ox, although these are found generally pretty well north—not many south of Etah.

There are many white wolf; fox (blue and white); arctic hare (big as jack-rabbits, fine eating, and thick as fleas) plenty of ptarmigan, which are fine for the pot but not much sport, since you can kill them with a rock; they don't flush easily; many varieties of seal—and you are a crack shot if you can hit one with a rifle when they are swimming; and literally millions of sea fowl, gulls of all species including the burgomaster with a six-foot wingspread, as well as many kinds of ducks beside the common eider and the king eider.

There is also the gerfalcon, and many species of small birds from warmer latitudes Summer up here.

Beside these, there are many small animals such as the ermine, lemming, etc.

I will also mention the narwhal, or sea unicorn, that has an 8-9 foot tusk, or horn, 2-3 inches in diameter at base and running to a needle point. This horn is excellent ivory of the very finest grain, but like the walrus ivory is of too small diameter to make billiard balls.

3. Of the arctic game animals, the bow-head and white whales, narwhal, and perhaps the walrus, are the only ones needing special equipment; all the rest may be taken by ordinary hunting-methods by any amateur sportsman. I saw "perhaps the walrus," because any one in a boat may row close to the ice pans, holding 50-60 walrus asleep after feeding, and kill what they desire with a .30-30 rifle. You can drop them where they lie if you hit the base of the skull *from behind*, a spot about the size of a silver dollar. Otherwise you must have native harpoons, floats and drags, and tackle to lift the two-ton mass upon ice, or rocks.

4. Pyritic granite, carrying muscovite and biotite, latter more rare than former. I have found deposits of clear muscovite near Olrick's Bay, which trimmed 8 x 10 inches. There is also a slate contact, and I'd like to prospect there for auriferous quartz, or spar, lodes.

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South of Melville Bay, especially in the vicinity of Sukkertoppen, there are quite extensive deposits of bituminous coal of a high grade; makes excellent steaming-coal. There are also deposits of cryolite, which have been worked in more or less desultory manner by the Danes since the '90's. Product shipped mostly to Denmark.

5. A large order, but I'll try to be briefly comprehensive. Following résumé is of the Eskimo *north* of Melville Bay, for they are the only full-blooded Eskimos on the globe. Those south of point mentioned are all more or less mixed with Danish, or other, blood.

There is little doubt that the Eskimo is of Mongolian ancestry; small of stature, high cheek-bones, straight black hair, and even in many cases a slant to the eyes. In addition, there is a crude form of ancestor-worship coupled with a fantastic, superstitious turn of mind, which peoples air, earth and water with spirits similar to the devils of the ignorant Chinese masses. These spirits are never beneficent; always evil and to be propitiated by the *an-gee-kok*, or medicine-man. Lastly, they have a legend of a migration from the west.

In their language you can trace the Oriental influence, since it is composed mostly of vowels. There is no written language. In offering examples one must spell by the phonetic method.

Chinese: *Cheefoo, Lee Sun, etc.*

Eskimo: *Mee-yoo, Ee-tah, Poo-too,* etc.

There are few verbs or adjectives. The verb *owd-lah-to* means "motion," and may be used either for coming or going. There are some suffixes, few prefixes. The suffix *soah* signifies large, or big; word for river is *coo;* a large river is *coo(k)soah.* The *k* is interpolated for euphony.

Oo-mee-ak is a woman's boat, open at the top and not covered, as are the hunter's kyaks; but when indicating a white man's ship, they call it *oo-mee-ak-soah,* in this case not needing to add the *k.* But Peary's more than six feet loomed mountainous beside their four feet, six inches or less, so they called him *Pee-ree-(ak)-soah.*

There are but 200-300 words in their language and only the most intelligent use as many as that. Few can count to five, and fewer still have any word at all for six. The numerals are:

1—*Ah-tow-shah,* or
2—*Muk-koo* (Baffinland)
Mart-look (Greenland)
3—*Ping-ah-shoo*
4—*Tish-ah-men*
5—*Ted-lee-men*
6—*Ak-bee-nuk-buhn* (rare)

As to customs and personal habits: Mentally they are hardly equal to the average normal Caucasian child of ten years of age. The reasoning faculty is not developed to any extent, though in the course of time necessity has led them to evolve certain appliances, which show that the power to reason is dormant.

They understand the three levers and how to apply them; they use a crude block and tackle to haul the two-ton walrus upon the ice. This latter is fashioned from material at hand; end of harpoon line is attached to a slit in the walrus' neck-hide, passed under a stout bridge cut in the ice some 10-12 feet from the water, and back through the slit in the hide, the free end constituting the "fall;" this gives them a one-way block, enabling three or four men easily to haul the walrus upon a pan projecting a couple of feet from the sea.

I have seen many sling-shots, with sealskin strings and holder, used as boys use them here, or as David did against Goliath. They know how to play "cat's-cradle," but the women play it during the long, dark Winter to snare the sun in its meshes; thus entangled, the sun is stopped on its southward trip and drawn back to the north.

The Summer, from middle of June to middle of September, is their holiday, when it is warm with the sun never setting, birds and game everywhere, water running, and the green grass waving in the soft south winds is starred with various colored flowers, dwarf buttercups and daisies, the lovely pale-yellow arctic poppy, crimson portulacca, and many sorts of white flowers. Game is easy to get, and they feast and laugh and play in the sun.

Little can be said for them as to personal habits, according to our own standards. They hate water, never touching it from birth to death if possible, except to drink. None of them can swim; all water is too cold to admit of learning; this in spite of the fact that much of the men's life is spent in their kyaks, or on the sea-ice.

All food is eaten raw. No cooking is done. The only fire is the *ik-ko-mah* lamp, of rudely carved soapstone, fed by seal-oil, with a wick of crushed moss. It is used in the snow igloos in Winter to furnish light and to dry mittens and boots, which are hung on a rack of rib bones over it.

Their main article of food is flesh—caribou, seal, gull, duck, fox, bear, walrus, etc.—eaten raw of course. The only vegetable diet they have is the contents of the stomach of the caribou.

Clothing is of course made from the skins of animals and birds; light, thin skins for Summer, heavier, or doubled, in Winter. Quite naturally, as you may gather from the above, there is plenty of vermin of all sorts and descriptions.

Morals there are none. They are unmoral, like animals. One way of putting it is that they are perfectly *natural.*

To most people it is difficult to comprehend their mental attitude. To them, clothing is merely for protection. With us, clothing is also, and mainly, used for cover. In this, I think, to use an expression in the vernacular, they have something on us.

They have no marriage rite; as far as I can learn about the only uncivilized people who do not; yet they are not promiscuous and are monogamous naturally. The younger men and women do try various "wives" or "husbands" as the case may be, but when finding a mate who is congenial they generally stick to that one alone till death.

They do not think it matters if they expose any part or all of the body, any more than if they expose the face, hands, or feet. Who shall say they are wrong? For century upon century we, civilized, so-called, have been forced to wear cover for protection of the community and for the race. It would seem that the Eskimo is more moral than we; he needs protection merely from the elements.

In a word, the Eskimo's life is an unending struggle against primitive forces of death; he works continually merely to provide food, clothing, and shelter; he has no diversions as we know them, his pleasures being a full stomach and a warm body.

Yet I have seen no more cheerful, joyous people than these. Their habitual expression is a smile, and in spite of the assertion that a meat-eating race is a warlike race there are no legends of wars or fighting. Ill humor is only occasional and is

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confined to a few scattered individuals; they quarrel seldom, and murder is almost unknown, although I have known of instances.

6. There is no religion, from any orthodox standpoint; merely a superstitious belief in certain spirits, or devils, without ceremony, rite or ritual. There are no beneficent spirits unless it be the sun and moon, which are tangible things. Their spirits are invisible and evil; a sea-spirit (female) called Sednah; a walrus spirit; one for the caribou, etc., including the big evil spirit Tor-nah-sook, who rides on the Winter winds and whom you can hear wailing and crying when the gales lash the cliffs and drive the spindrift in screaming sheets across the snowfields in the black night of Winter. This subject alone is interesting enough for a volume.

One example will give you an idea: When starting upon a walrus hunt, the *an-gee-kok* goes into a trance and calls down and captures the evil spirit controlling the walrus. He can not kill this spirit, but he ties it so that it can not go ahead and warn the walrus that the hunters are coming.

In addition, they have so many tabus that one wonders how they can remember them all. For example: The women are forbidden to work on walrus tusks during the season for hunting caribou, and *vice versa*. If these tabus are broken, the sea-spirit, Sed-nah, will draw them down to the bottom where she sits and her father will torment them.

No Eskimo will voluntarily go up on the great inland ice-cap—it is people by departed spirits, presumably evil. They have a heaven and hell of sorts; hell being a place of continual dark and cold, with no game; heaven being an eternal Summertime, warm, sunlit, with plenty of game easy to get.

No missions north of Melville Bay. Southern Greenland has a few schools established by the Danes, where the precepts of the Greek Church are taught.

As I have observed in most other cases, particularly the work of the Church of England among the Siwashes of southeastern Alaska, the natives put on this "white man's belief" as a veneer and because it pleases the dominant and exceedingly persistent white man. Thus they are "converted," sing the songs and hymns of praise and otherwise go through the forms prescribed. In no case, so far as I have seen, is the inner man affected, mainly I think because he can not comprehend.

The Rev. Samuel Peck, sent out by churches in Aberdeen, Scotland, has labored for forty years in the vicinity of Black Lead Island, Cumberland Gulf, Baffinland. In that period Peck made a written language of Eskimo, translated the entire New Testament and taught them to read it.

I met many of them at Cape Sabine and at the head of Frobisher Bay after they had been under his instruction for some 10-15 years, and I can testify from personal observation that the native soul, their understanding, had not been touched. They sang the hymns at intervals, but that is as far as it went; the inner self had not swerved one hair's breadth from their own beliefs and habits of thought.

I saw the same thing in Alaska, as I've said, and personally I do not believe in trying to change them. If they, or the Chinese, or Hindus, or Africans, etc., etc., are consistent and live up to what they believe, haven't they as good a right to Paradise as if they wore badly the coat we try to fit them with? Radical surely; but why not?

This has been a long letter, but as I mentioned it is a big subject. Thanks for your offer, contained in the final paragraph. As a matter of fact, I was born in Cambridge, Mass., was a resident of the City of Newton for about twelve years, was educated in the Newton schools and Boston Tech., and beside having a canoe on the old Charles River I hunted and fished over much of the back country around Needham, Dedham, and Dover as well as in various parts of Massachusetts Bay and along the "North Shore." Nevertheless your offer is appreciated.

Anything else that I can write you that may be interesting, let me know. You should get Peary's final account of his trip to the Pole, or Vjelmar Stephenson's book, about to be published.

I neglected to mention that number 6 of your queries was answered in number 2, of my own reply.

If you wish to see actually the Eskimo in his home by all means take in the film called "Nanook of the North" recently released. It was taken in Labrador, west side edging Hudson Bay, but it is the best thing I've seen and will give you a graphic picture of how they look, live and work. It is all straight goods and well worth going some distance to see.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Life in the Philippines

THE islands are no place for the jobless:

Question:—"I am engaged to a man who is at present in the navy, stationed at the Asiatic station.

He insists that living and business conditions are much better in the Orient than on this side of the Pacific. He plans to make our home in Manila, P. I.

Will you be kind enough to tell me about conditions in general in the Philippine Islands, Manila especially?

How could I travel to Manila at the minimum expense?"—LORETTA R. MCBRIDE, Jersey City, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Connor:—In a generic way business is thriving in the islands, but its effect is felt more by the natives than by American wage-earners, excepting, of course, those whose positions are secured from long service and familiarity with customs and business conditions. It is not—from my latest reports from the islands—considered a safe risk to venture to Manila or any of the other cities with a view to a livelihood from a wage-earner's standpoint.

However, if your fiancé is on the ground, and possibly has located himself in one of the very rare opportunities that seldom arise, he should be better able to judge just what his future will be. He may have located himself in some Government position—at a navy yard at Cavite, Olongopo or some other city. But he should make sure that he is secured before making such a step.

Manila—of recent years—has developed into a very cosmopolitan city, and you will find there most everything you will find in an American city (which it is) from cabarets, racetracks, picture theaters, flivvers and wonderful shopping districts—these are both American and Oriental. The Sing Fat

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Stores of the United States are just mere starters when compared with some of those Oriental shops in Manila, Hongkong and Nagasaki.

The climate is divided into three seasons—hot and dry, hot and wet, and wet and quite cool. It compares favorably with Florida and Louisiana in temperature. You can wear whites almost the year round. The men wear generally—in office work—snow-white drill suits, white shoes and straws or helmets. In the field it is changed to khaki cloth. A light wrap of wool is not amiss when the wet and cool season approaches.

If your fiancé is in Government employ and has the proper permission to transport you to the islands, the United States army transports carry wives of officers and employees at a very reasonable fee—charging just for meals while *en route*. But he will have to get permission for your passage aboard the vessel, and that comes through his division chief or department head. Otherwise you will have to take passage aboard a vessel and book your passage early at the cost of about $375 one way. This does not include steward tips, etc.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

The "Code Duello"

MR. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, our expert on old firearms, is a lawyer. What would you think of the man who would ask him to draw up a brief without fee as part of his "Ask Adventure" work, on the ground that some aspect of old firearms was involved in the legal merits of the case at issue? Especially if the inquirer intended to sell the information so obtained to one of Mr. Barker's own clients? That *would* be cool, wouldn't it?

Well, here's a correspondent who wants Mr. Barker to supply him with a lot of information about dueling—history, law, usages—presumably on the ground that dueling involves the use of dueling-pistols. And what does Friend Correspondent want this information for? Why, to work it into a magazine article, which is precisely the same use that Mr. Barker makes of his own knowledge!

And to cap the climax, Mr. Barker gives him the information!

Some people are too angelic for this world. And others are too nervy:

Question:—"*In re:* DUELING-PISTOLS:

1. Does the code require that a smooth-bore be used, or is a rifled barrel permissible?
2. What is the prescribed caliber?
3. What is regarded as the proper length of the barrel, and is the weight of the pistol specified?

In short: What constitutes a 'legal weapon' under the provisions of the Code Duello?

4. Should the principals stand at 'raise' or 'lower' pistol?
5. How should the command to fire be given, and how is the time gaged?
6. Are not wax bullets frequently used for practise?
7. Wasn't dueling practised in this country up to the time of the Civil War?
8. Are there any books that cover the history of dueling in America?

"Any fool can ask questions, but it takes a wise man to answer them," and such information or suggestions you may care to send me will be greatly appreciated. Have been asked to write some magazine articles on dueling-pistols simply because I happened to witness a few encounters that were arranged by appointment and took place outside of the United States. And the sordid truth is—I am not at all well informed on the subject."

Answer, by Mr. Barker:—To begin with, in order to answer your questions, I must tell you that there is not, nor has there ever been, so far as I know, any single recognized "Code Duello." Such things have differed by custom in different countries and different ages.

Generally speaking, I presume the challenged party has always had the choice of time, place, distance and weapons. Seconds were unknown under the Judicial Wager of Battle, out of which dueling grew. The custom of seconds fighting and that of duels on horseback have been discarded for more than a century. As a general proposition one can say no more than that the challenged party, in the matter of weapon, time and distance, shall be governed by usage between gentlemen, and extraordinary propositions may be rejected by the challenger.

American duelists have never adopted a written code. And in this country rifles, knives, and such unusual weapons have been used.

The only written code I know of was one adopted at Clonmel, Summer Assizes, 1777, by the gentlemen delegates of Tipperary, Galway, Mayo, Sligo and Roscommon, for general use throughout Ireland. These, thirty-six in number, dealt principally with offenses, apologies, how much fighting was necessary to wipe out given affronts, choice of certain matters, loading, firing, etc., and presupposed pistols to be the weapons used.

Specifically:

1. I am not aware of any Code that specifies smooth-bore or rifled barrel. Nearly all flint-lock dueling-pistols *were* smooth-bore. Percussion have been both, usually rifled.
2. No caliber is prescribed. They were usually very large, running up to .80.
3. Neither weight nor length of barrel is prescribed, so that the weapons be identical in all particulars.
4. Both are done. Usually settled by agreement by seconds, sometimes by principals in the original challenge.
5. As above. Space precludes my giving examples.
6. I am not aware.
7. To a considerable extent, until the wicked and utterly unwarranted killing of a member of Congress from Maine by one from Kentucky did much to abolish the practise.
8. There are no books especially covering the history of dueling in America.

If you were here it would give me pleasure to tell you a great deal more in detail. Pardon me, however, if I suggest that I am very busy in the

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practise of law, lecturing on this and other subjects, and writing on the same, as well as busy with certain political matters, and have not time to write sufficiently for a magazine article. Which indeed is not the purpose of "Ask Adventure," nor does this detailed information come exactly within my province.

If I may be pardoned for making a suggestion: If you have witnessed encounters in the nature of duels in recent years—which I assume were not fought with dueling-pistols, as no such things have been generally made since the days of percussion caps—and in addition if your knowledge of dueling-pistols is slight, why write on "Dueling-Pistols" as a subject when I should imagine that you, and you alone, could write a most interesting article or articles on these specific duels, without mentioning names or places?

If you want an answer, read the rules.

Lands in Northern Ontario

HOMESTEADS of 160 acres are free; and possibilities for hunting, fishing and trapping lie all about you. Also lots of possibilities for hard work, especially if you're not overburdened with capital:

Question:—"Am writing to you for information about Ontario, Can. I will try to give you an idea of what we want, also about my pal and myself, that you may be better able to answer my many questions.

My pal and I are both married men with no children. We both have been over the greater part of the world. We can do most anything in the line of work. I hold a chief engineer's ocean license, unlimited tonnage. My pal is a steam-shovel engineer. We have worked at 'most all lines of trade and a few outside.

We are twenty-five and twenty-eight years old, and are both used to roughing it and like hunting, trapping and fishing. Our wives also like the out-of-doors. We can handle anything in the boat line from a canoe to sea-going craft. Now after thinking and planning a lot for what we have in mind, we have decided on Ontario.

What we want is to get quite a ways from civilization back into God's country where we could homestead or buy up several hundred acres of land. It would need to be on a lake or river running into a chain of lakes that we could use sail-boat on or navigate with canoe, also hunting such as deer and bear in season.

A place where we could raise our own living such as corn, potatoes, tomatoes and fruits as well as other vegetables. The idea in having plenty of good trapping and fishing is to build five or ten log cabins to rent to city sportsmen in the Summer season. What do you think of this idea, and do you think we could make a go of it with a capital of one thousand dollars or smaller, as we could put the cabins up ourselves?

Could we make enough on the side by trapping and working out around to buy the few necessities of life as clothes and so forth? Our idea is to have a real home and happiness; not to make a fortune; only to make a good living where we can hunt and fish and be free from the crowds. These are the places we think possible and have figured on: Harwood on Rice Lake; Bobcaygeon on Pigeon Lake; Lakefield on Clear Lake; Whitney on Long Lake.

As these places are all on railroads we could always reach them in case of necessity within two or three days' journey. I have rambled on to such an extent that I will just list a few of my questions in compact form for your convenience.

1. What chance is there for homesteading, and what are the Canadian regulations on homesteading claims? What does land sell for an acre where we would want to settle down?
2. What is the climate, how cold in Winter or how hot in Summer? Is it damp or unhealthy or swampy around the places I have named?
3. Is the Summer season long enough to raise potatoes, corn, tomatoes, other vegetables or fruits?
4. Is there anything against United States citizens taking up homesteading claims?
5. What kinds of hunting, fishing and trapping are there?
6. Would there be any chance of picking up odd work to help out?
7. Are the roads good enough to make the trip from here to any of the above named places with a Ford?
8. Would there be any duty on furniture moved into Canada if we homesteaded?

If the places I have named are not any of them suitable for the purpose we wish could you suggest anything any better to us or any other places better fitted for our purpose?"—MORRIS VAN KUREN, Cleveland, O.

Answer, by Mr. Moore:—Pardon my delay in answering your letter of the 15th inst., but your questions demanded so much investigation that I had to have the time to look them up.

Now then we will take the four places you mention in your letter. Harwood, impossible; Bobcaygeon, impossible; Lakefield, impossible; Long Lake——

I am putting the first three down as impossible for the following reasons: They are right out in the center of civilization where the fishing is very good, but full of resorters and therefore no place for you. That narrows down the field to Long Lake near Whitney.

I am not sure, nor have I been able to find out yet, whether or not Long Lake is in Algonquin Provincial Park, but if it is or even near the park boundary it would be out of the question also. Algonquin Park is a reserve for our game, and God help any man found in it with a gun or fishing-line (must get a permit to fish there and pay real kale for that privilege).

Another thing about Long Lake—there is no road into it except the railroad. You could not get there by motor.

Answering your questions in order:

1. Homesteads of 160 acres may be secured free by making application in northern Ontario and a few of the townships in the Ottawa Valley. The Northern Ontario lands may be purchased at 50 cents per acre. Homestead regulations imposed: Must be British subject or subject of friendly country giving understanding of becoming a British subject. Must clear and cultivate 15 acres of land, erect a habitable house 16x20 feet. Must clear and cultivate two acres each and every year for three years. Full information may be secured from Mr.

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Hal A. Macdonnell, Director of Colonization, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.

•2. Climate varies. May run below 45 degrees zero in Winter to 100 above in Summer. Country is healthy.

3. Summer season is plenty long enough, though frost comes a little earlier than farther south.

4. Answered in No. 1.

5. Deer, moose, caribou, beaver, mink, marten, fox, etc., etc. Trout, bass, pike, pickerel, etc., etc. Country seems to be pretty well stocked. Trapping requires license; royalty on all skins must be paid to the Government.

6. Yes. There are the mines, the lumber companies either in the bush or at their mills, cutting pulp-wood, etc.

7. Already answered in introduction as regards places mentioned. Believe you could get into northern Ontario by car.

8. There is no duty on furniture coming into Canada, but settler must sign a settler's-effect entry stating that goods will be held for one year without resale.

There is country up the Madawaska River between Calabogie on the C. P. R., Kingston-Renfrew line, which can be entered by motor car. There are settlers all through that section, which runs through the hill country on up to Long Lake at Whitney and still farther into Algonquin Park to where it has its source.

This country is full of small lakes and streams and is fairly well provided with deer and small game. Fishing is always good. There are bass, trout (gray, red and brook).

There are vast areas of this land, which is no good except for cattle or sheep grazing; but one might find little valleys where he could find a suitable place for a camp and to grow his vegetables.

I was hunting in the Fall of 1920 at one end of this territory. One man had a place ten miles square fenced off for a cattle ranch. There is no doubt there was some place in that ranch that would grow all the stuff any ordinary man would want. This rancher had the land leased from the Government.

Deer were plentiful there. Wolves were very bad at that time. There were signs of fox, bear, lots of partridge, snow-shoe rabbits galore.

I could ramble on and on and tell you of another similar spot east of Long Lake between Madawaska Village and the country all around Aylen Lake. The only thing about that part of the country is that you could not get in by car, while down at the Calabogie end you could.

I've driven seventy miles north and east of here and came into another very beautiful hill country. Met a settler up there who came in from Chicopee Falls, Mass., fifty years ago, and has done well. He has his own car, and the roads are good. He was entering some American who comes over here every year to fish.

What makes it hard for the outsider is the fact that most of the settlers have sons who when they grow up spy around and when they find a suitable location they "nail" it. However, there might be something in between the place where I referred to last and the Madawaska that would suit you. I think if you could come over and go back in there and nose around you might find something to suit you. The crowds will never worry you any, and if I had my way they would have to cut a road into my shack.

Sorry I can not give you more explicit instructions or answers to your questions, but as this country is so tremendously large there is lots of room for you—the only rub is to find the place that you want.

I hope to hear from you. And if you come over let me know how you make out. I would advise you to go to your customs officers and get your necessary papers put through so that you won't be delayed over here. And if you make the trip and find your place, give me your address—I wander around whenever I can get a chance.

Hog-Tying a Steer

WITH good teamwork between pony and rider, it's only a matter of seconds to turn the trick:

Question:—"I would greatly appreciate it if you will please tell me how to hog-tie a steer. I saw an illustration where a calf was roped and hog-tied, but a steer could not be hog-tied in the same manner, for the puncher held the calf down by superior strength. Suppose you lasso a steer either by the feet or neck and throw him. Your horse has to keep the rope tight so the steer won't get up, and that is the part I don't understand. Please explain."—L. C. Beirne, Jr., Cincinnati, O.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—It is easy to teach an intelligent horse to keep a rope taut between horn and horns—the saddle and the steer.

The cowboy starts after his steer on the jump. He runs up on him at the left side—get that straight; always the left. He swings his loop and ropes the brute around the horns, pulls the loop close enough to keep it on, and keeps right on with his pony's head at the left of the steer's hips.

Then, as they run, he flips the slack of the rope over these same hips, so it runs past the steer's right thigh. As soon as the rope is in this position he slams the spurs home, goes racing past and jerks the steer's hindlegs forward and to the left. The steer hits the ground on his right side, usually sticking a horn in the dirt. Then the cowboy hops off with his "piggin'-rope" and flips its noose over one forefoot, jerks it back between the hind ones, takes a double wrap, with the little rope crossing itself, and ties with one swift corkscrew motion.

This is one of the ways of doing it, one I have seen worked many times. Also, I have seen a steer turned end over end and tied before he recovered from the shock.

At times a steer dodges until the cowboy loses patience. Then he casts a "blocker" over his shoulders, catches the right foot and proceeds with the throwing stunt. I once chased one till I got mad, then "heeled" him, ran my horse around him and flopped him with the rope hauling one rear foot forward to his front legs, which were impeded by the rope.

That is not a desirable thing to do, for several reasons. I was young then and out of patience. I also rode my horse clear over one once, when the brute turned back into the herd the fourth time after being cut out; but I don't advise that as a regular stunt.

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Old Songs That Men Have Sung

The Jim River Line

Me and my pal for Aberdeen were bound
To work for old Flannagan and sleep on the ground;
We got to Aberdeen, and no place to lie,
And with alkali water I thought we'd die,
And an old box car looked pretty fine
To make us a flop on the Jim River Line.

We hit the super and master of trains
And got a job on account of our brains.
We made our first trip on a bright Summer day
And signed up for a pie-card, as we wanted to stay;
And everything but the chuck was fine
As we swung the bright lantern on the Jim River Line.

Old Bob runs a café, and I'm sure it will pass—
Sells alkali water at ten cents a glass,
Cigars made of cabbage, but which smoke pretty fine
As we pull the rusty pins on the Jim River Line.

Ike Apple runs a store out on the hill—
You could buy all that's in it for a two-dollar bill.
He has overalls and jackets and shoes that won't shine,
But he'll trust you while you work on the Jim River Line.

Flannagan came to our caboose one morning in May
To hunt for some whisky that had gone astray;
We said, "Mr. Flannagan, go hunt through the 'gine,
For they use it 'stead of water on the Jim River Line."

We pulled the pin and for the West we did strike,
In search of more trouble that the boomers like—
But we fought a small battle under Gillick and Ryan
As we drove the "no bills" from the Jim River Line.

John Henry

John Henry said, when a little little boy
Sitting on his mama's knee,
"Oh, the Big Bend Tunnel on the C. B. Line
Is going to be the death of me,
Is going to be the death of me."

John Henry was a railroad man;
He worked in Tunnel Number Nine,
And ev'ry time the captain called for him
John Henry, he's busy all the time,
John Henry, he's busy all the time.

John Henry was a steel-driving man;
He worked in Tunnel Number Four,
And ev'ry time he struck a piece of steel
He'd sink it down an inch or more,
He'd sink it down an inch or more.

John Henry had a loving little wife,
Her name was Julie Ann;
John Henry was sick and had to go to bed,
And Julie drove steel like a man,
And Julie drove steel like a man.
Oh, she picked up a hammer in her lily-white hand,
For she could drive steel like a man,
For she could drive steel like a man.

The big steam drill on the right-hand side,
John Henry on the left—
He said before he'd let it beat him down
He'd hammer his fool self to death,
Oh, he'd hammer his fool self to death.

I married me a woman that lived in town,
She makes four dollars ev'ry day,
But never comes home till nine o'clock at night,
And I'm tired of living thisaway,
I'm tired of living thisaway.

Oh, where'd you get that pretty red hat,
Them shoes and stockings fine?
"Oh, I got the shoes from a railroad man,
And the stockings from a driver in the mines,
And the stockings from a driver in the mines."

John Henry had a loving little wife;
She dressed herself in blue,
And ev'rything she ever said to him
'S, "John Henry, hain't I been true?
John Henry, hain't I been true?"

Late last night when my baby come home,
Come a-knocking on the door,
I laid so still with my Mother Hubbard on,
Saying, "Baby, don't you knock no more,"
Saying, "Baby, don't you knock no more."
(*Transcript from Dr. Alson Baker, Berea, Ky.*)

Down in the Old Cherry Orchard

by ALFRED BRYAN

Harvest-time has kissed the fields with ripened splendor,
And the cherries hang in clusters from the trees;
Down the orchard trills the robin sweet and tender,
As I tell love's story old to dear Louise;
'Tis a vision of a day that haunts my dreaming,
Just a picture set in mem'ry's golden frame,
There's the cherry orchard, and the moonlight gleaming,
Where I spoke the words that set her heart aflame.

Refrain: Down in the old cherry orchard,
Under the old cherry-tree,
Ev'ry night in the moon's silv'ry light,
She'd sing love songs to me;
There first I fondled and kissed her;
She gave her heart there to me,
Down in the old cherry orchard,
Under the old cherry-tree.

'Neath the cherry-tree she waited my returning;
I had promised her that I'd come back some day,
For the lamp of hope still in her heart kept burning,
Till it flickered, like the Summer passed away.
In the little nook that held Love's secrets tender,
There I found a message that she left for me,
"Although you've forgotten, sweetheart, I'll remember,
And I'll keep my love through all eternity."—*Ref.*
(*Transcript from Jack Brown, Pensacola, Fla.*)

Accompany your inquiry with stamped, self-addressed envelop.

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Compadre J. W. M. of Akron, Ohio, sends in the verses of "The Murder of Blue-eyed Ella," which we hand you herewith. He says it is a banjo wail more than a song and that he has heard the darkies in the South sing a constantly changing version of it hour after hour. Many thanks, J. W. M.

The Murder of Blue-Eyed Ella

'Way down in the Lehigh Valley,
Where the flowers fade and bloom,
There lies my blue-eyed Ella,
So silent in the tomb.

She died not broken-hearted,
Nor did sickness end her life;
It was a black-eyed villain
In his hands a deadly knife.

One night when the stars were shining
And the moon was shining too,
Up to the lonely cottage
The jealous villain drew.

"Now, Ella, at last I've got you!
You have no wings to fly;
No mortal power can save you;
Fair Ella, you must die."

On bended knees before him
She pleaded for her life,
When into her lily-white bosom
He plunged the deadly knife.

"Oh, Ella, you must forgive me,
And your parents forgive me too—
And I'll flee to some far-off country
And I never will dream of you."

The villain was caught next morning
And on the gallows hung
For the murder of blue-eyed Ella,
For the crime that he had done.

Compadre George T. Sayles, P. O. Box 344, San Francisco, while making a *pasear* amongst the terpsichorean palaces of pleasure down in Algodones, Mexico, a few months ago, heard a dark-eyed *señorita* warble something that sounded like this:

Back to Whisky Chitto,
To Beau-Regarde Bayou,
Back to Louisiana,
To my Louisiana Lou.

And he puts it up to you baby-blue-eyed innocents to dig up the rest of it. I have written Sayles, taking him to task for going down to Algodones without me, and he has promised to take me along next time if I find the balance of the foregoing ditty. Anybody say anything?

Compadre F. T. MacGowan, 2092 Amsterdam Ave., New York, is stalking a bit of a war melody sung to the tune of the "Darktown Strutters' Ball" by the "Twenty-seventh." He can recall only the chorus, which runs thus—

"The machine-gun bullets all around me whistle,
And the old tin hat feels mighty small."

Can any brother finish it off for MacGowan?

Send your old songs or requests for 'em, to ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York. Do not send questions to this magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

APRIL 30TH ISSUE

CASSIDY AND THE WILD BUNCH **An Article** — *Frederick R. Bechdolt*
The story of a famous outlaw's only killing.

THE FANTOM HONOR — *Albert Richard Wetjen*
A problem on a plague-ship.

A SORE LOSER — *Georges Surdez*
A beachcomber fights for bread in Indo-China.

THE NINE UNKNOWN **Conclusion** — *Talbot Mundy*
The newspapers said *it* was an earthquake.

HABIT — *F. R. Buckley*
"Who loves me, loves my ship," was the attitude of *Captain Weatherfield*.

THE HAND OF FRIENDSHIP **An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali**
Held for ransom in Tangier. — *George E. Holt*

RED AUTUMN **A Five-Part Story** **Part II** — *Hugh Pendexter*
A fist-fight with an Indian audience in 1812.

FADING LIGHT **An Off-the-Trail Story** — *J. D. Newsom*
The vengeance of the vanquished.

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EVERY reader of Adventure *knows Pat Greene, the man in charge of "Lost Trails." He is also the radio "Ask Adventure" man and one of the Editors. He has spent many years in South Africa and is an authority on the life of the veld.*

His kraal, his white master—
which means more to the Hottentot?

L. Patrick Greene, who has spent many years in South Africa, has written a story on this subject for *Everybody's*. "His Own People" is the tale of Jim, the black servant of a white man, who returns to his tribe and is made chief. Will he be satisfied among his own people after trekking ten years with his white *baas?* Will his love for his master overcome his love of power? You will want to read this engrossing story which appears in

Everybody's Magazine **for April**

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